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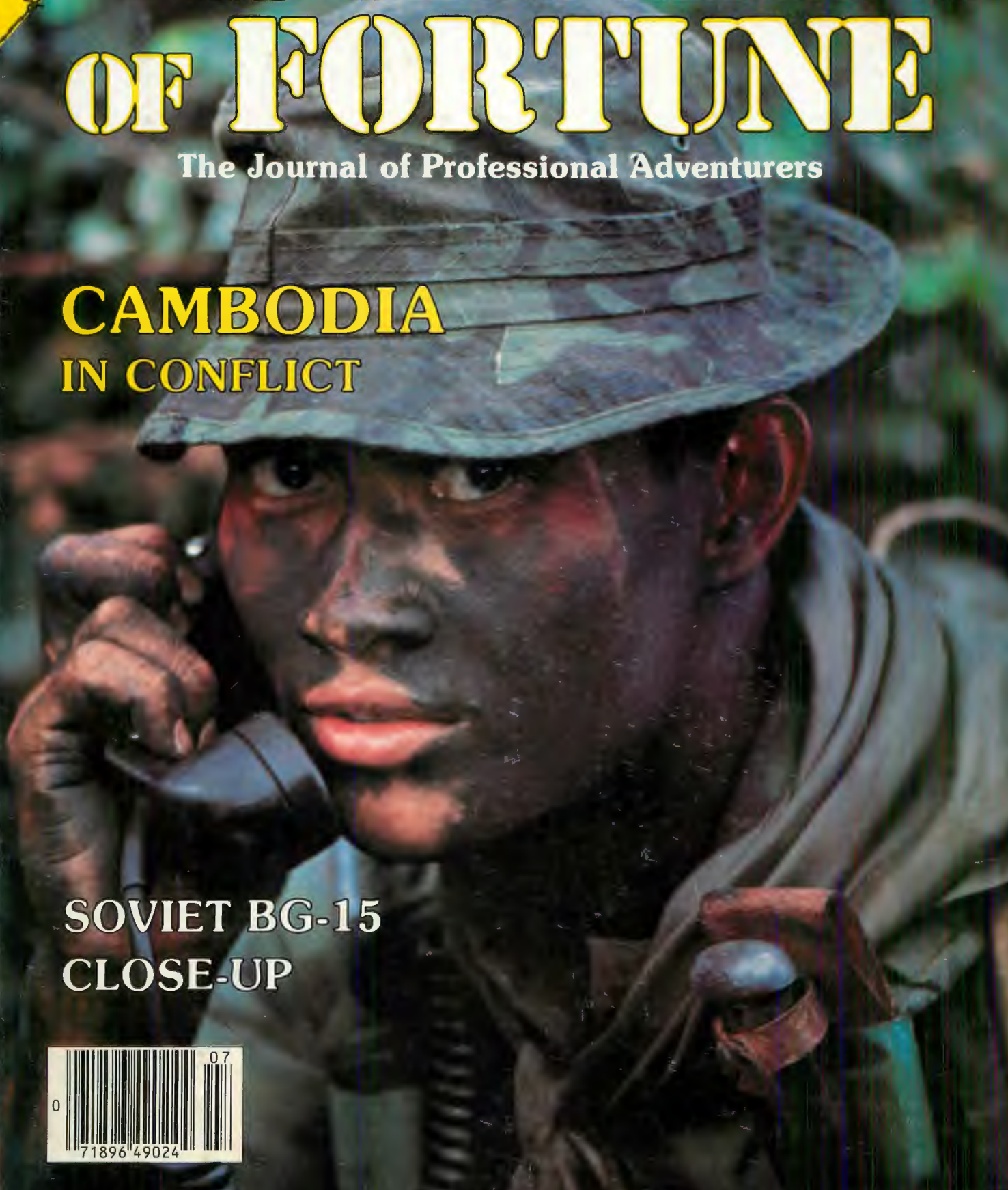
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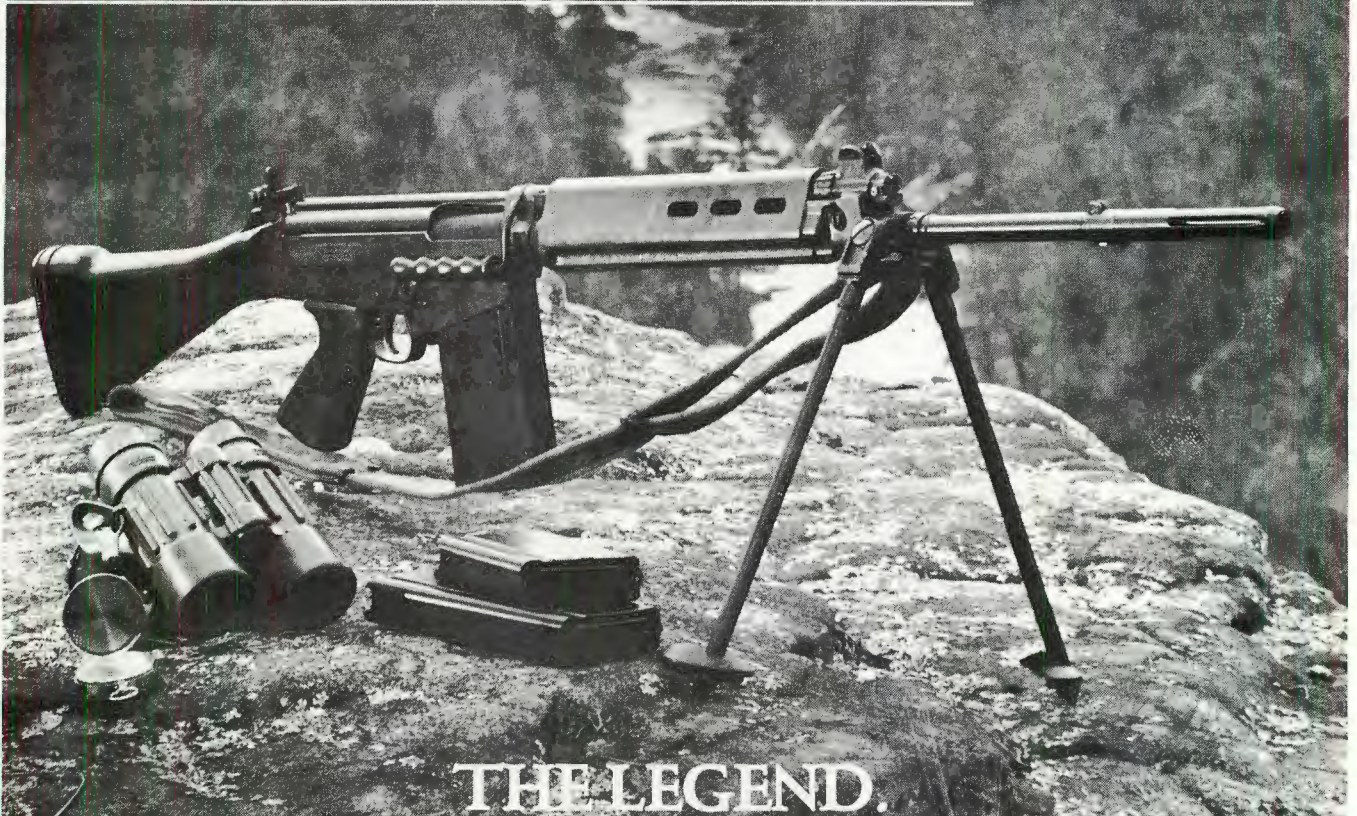
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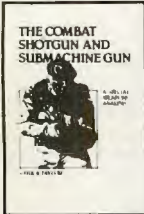




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# DE-BRIEF

by Dale A. Dye, Executive Editor

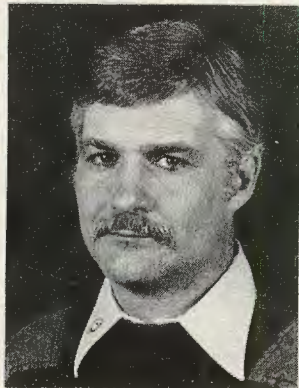
**W**E hate to say it — Lord knows America's Vietnam Veterans don't need any more bad news — but General William C. Westmoreland copped out on all of us when he surrendered to CBS and dropped his libel suit. It's not like an old campaigner to cut and run in the face of enemy pressure unless the tactical situation demands a strategic withdrawal to prevent total defeat or unless your supporting arms fail. I think Westy faced both of those problems.

Still, he could have counterattacked or at least maneuvered himself into a more favorable position for defense against the CBS assault. He did neither. In fact,

Westmoreland dropped the \$120 million suit not long before it was scheduled to go to a jury. The move was ironically reminiscent of the Paris Peace Talks that eventually ended the Vietnam War, which Westy directed for four turbulent years. A statement announcing compromise in the case was vague enough to suggest an oriental face-saving ploy of the type U.S. peace negotiator Henry Kissinger regularly allowed the North Vietnamese to make back in the mid-1970s. Who knows? Maybe the attorneys got distracted arguing over the shape of the table on which the deal was made.

Only one thing is clear at this point. General Westmoreland lost the battle. That's disappointing news for those of us who backed him both in spirit and with our hard-earned money. It signifies that you *really can't* fight City Hall — or any other mega-buck bureaucracy — and expect to win in the end. Even if you crap on their

doorstep, they've got the money and power to make you clean it up. If there's any good news for America's Vietnam Veterans in the CBS victory, it may be proof that the politicians never really intended for us to win the war. In the end our combat tactics were driven by consideration for public opinion more than any desire to defeat the enemy. Even Westmoreland admitted he did not want to include higher figures for certain marginally effective enemy formations in his reports to President Johnson because he feared they could be easily misinterpreted and might have a negative public-relations effect.



That does not explain why Westmoreland could find vindication in a CBS statement that it respected the general's faithful service to the country and had not intended to suggest that he had been disloyal in performing his duty "as he saw it." There's the face-saving phrase and an indicator that Westy could see no light at the end of the judicial

tunnel. In a real war — one in which the battlefield situation is the primary concern and political considerations are secondary — a commander's duty is clear. He needs to win. How he interprets his duty beyond that makes no difference. Taken to task, the commander who can't decisively prove his only considerations were victory and the welfare of his troops backs off in a hurry.

He may also be forced to retreat if his planned supporting arms fail. I think Westmoreland suffered in this regard from inadequate representation. His attorneys seemed to

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**COVER:** With a vigilance born of centuries of border violations, the Thai military has responded to the present Vietnamese threat with specially trained troops like the Thai Rangers. They keep watch over the simmering situation on the Cambodian border that constantly threatens to spill over into Thai territory. SOF's coverage of the Cambodian border tension begins on p. 46. Photo: David Mills

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## S OF DECADE...

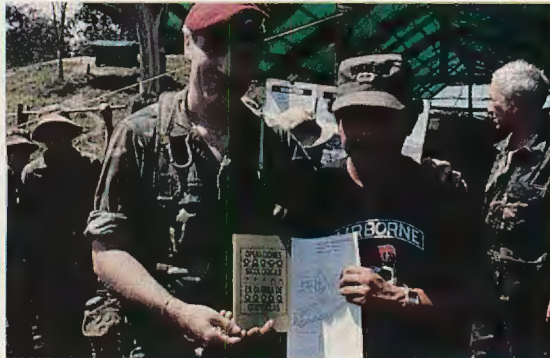
They said the second issue would never make the stands but — 10 years and 93 issues later — Bob Brown's bastard child, *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine, is still with us, informing, infiltrating and outraging most of the civilized (and some of the uncivilized) world.

Our magazine has continued to grow in popularity and credibility. It still leads the league among a rash of imitators and is read regularly by some of the most influential and well-informed Americans. From Moscow and Tel Aviv to Saudi Arabia and Nicaragua, many of the world's movers and shakers read SOF. We are extremely popular in the PX where professional fighting men look for reading material and we rank right up there with the girlie magazines in many barracks worldwide.

We've been censored, ridiculed or banned in New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain and Guatemala, but that hasn't hurt us. You can't find a copy of SOF in the USSR — unless you're KGB or a general in the Red Army — yet men have risked prison to smuggle *Soldier of Fortune* into Czechoslovakia and Poland.

That makes us *something special*; a phenomenon in American magazine publishing. You can find out why — if you can find a copy of our August 1985 10th Anniversary Special issue. Subscribers will get their copy early, but our blockbuster special will be on newsstands in mid-July. We'd recommend you get there early.

# BULLETIN BOARD



**TOP: Comandante Gustavo, CO of Echo Co. — the F.D.N.'s Special Ops company — receives SOF's edition of the CIA manual (English translation published in the February 1985 SOF) from Dale Dye. ABOVE: SOF staffers continue posting reward notices inside Nicaragua and in resistance bases outside the country, soliciting Nicaraguans who want to earn \$100,000 by helping their country. Photos: James L. Pate**

## NO GUNS ON PEOPLE EXPRESS...

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A class action suit has already been filed against People Express in the U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Va. The suit is supported by the NRA Firearms Civil Rights Legal Defense Fund, Dept. SOF, 1230 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, and all contributions to the fund are tax-deductible. *Anyone* (not just NRA members) denied transportation or arrested because of People Express' anti-gun policies should contact the Office of the General Counsel, National Rifle Association, 1600 Rhode Island Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. And don't forget, your membership fees for joining the NRA are your best-spent gun-law lobbying dollars.

## DELLUMS CANNED...

Liberal Congressman Ron Dellums (D-Calif.), known for radical stands on a number of issues, was one of the first celebrities to be arrested earlier this year for crossing the barricades placed 500 feet away from the South African Embassy during a protest over racial policies. It was all photo flashes, fingerprints, mugshots, grandstanding and free publicity for the Berkeley, Calif., politico . . . up to the point where the D.C. cops clapped him in the lock-up with common criminals.

Perhaps expecting to be carried about the cell on the grateful shoulders of other black men in the slammer, Dellums was surprised when the residents tore into him with heated questions on his drum-beating for African blacks. It seems they wanted to know — minus the political rhetoric — why he wasn't carrying on with such abandon on behalf of American blacks who had problems right here at home.

Where were their jobs? Where was the housing? Why wasn't Dellums doing something about that?

It all got rather hot, according to our Washington correspondent Jim Graves who winds up with the report that Dellums finally showed his solidarity with his fellow black prisoners by asking for — and getting — a solitary cell.

We should all be blessed with that kind of courage to back our convictions.

## FREEDOM FIGHTERS...

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**L** **Folding Trench Knife.** The 3 1/2" stainless steel blade folds conveniently into the unique knuckle handle for protection and safety. The 5" steel handle has a decorative inset. Length open—8 1/2". Order No. 172010 **\$19.95 Sale \$9.95**

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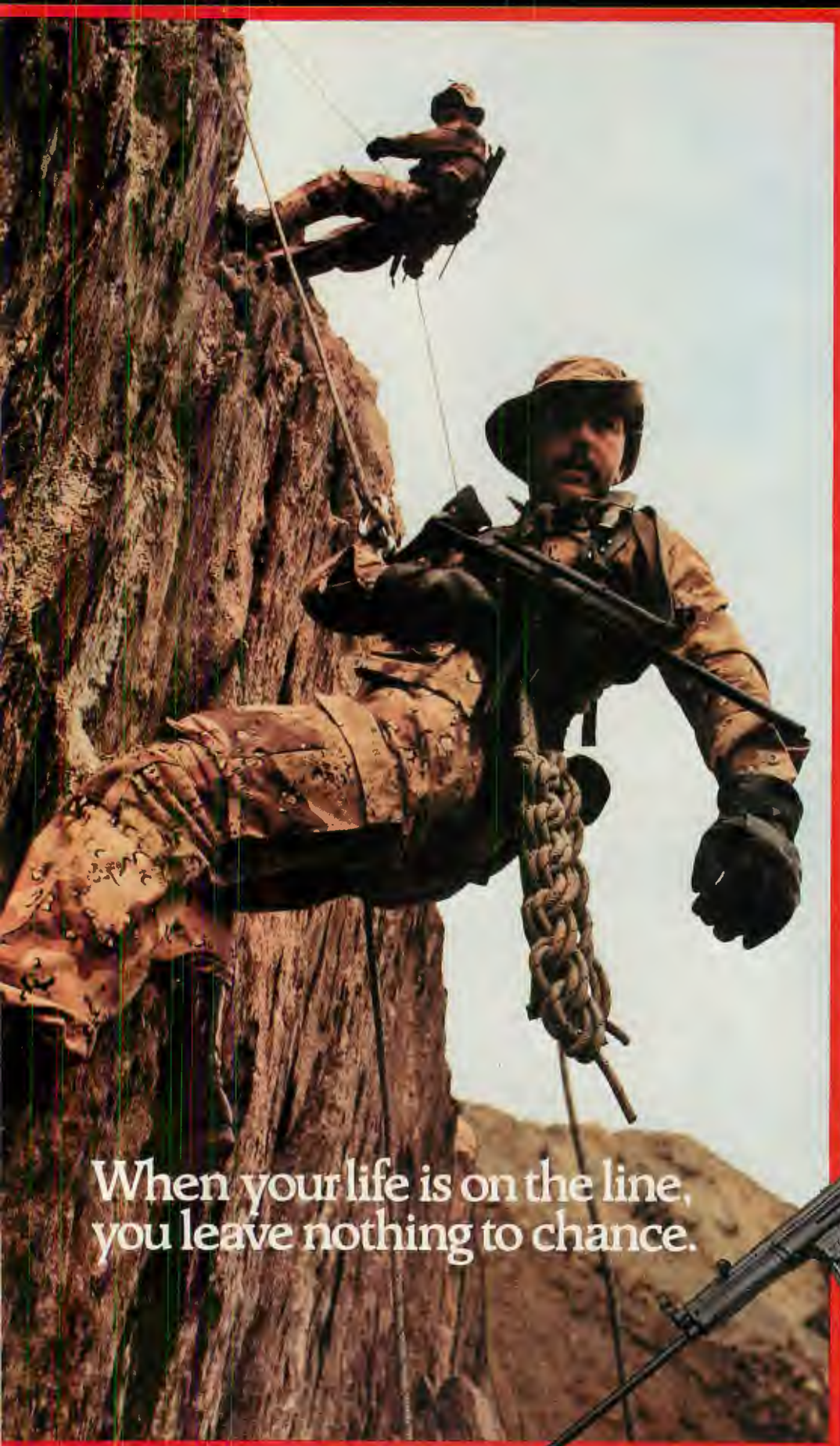
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## SUBSCRIBERS TAKE NOTE...

Sirs:

We have just moved and need our address changed for our subscription to *Soldier of Fortune*.

Brent Mowrer  
Gallup, N.M.

Thank you, Mr. Mowrer, for providing us your new and old addresses. Subscribers should note, however, that in addition to this information they should include an old address label from SOF. This has computer information necessary to make the address change more quickly. Even with the label, readers should allow six to eight weeks for the change to take effect. Unfortunately for Mr. Mowrer, unless he has notified the post office that he will pay the cost to forward newspapers and magazines, he may miss an issue or two. We regret that this is beyond our control. So readers, be sure and include an old address label when notifying us of a change in your address. Thanks.

## THANKS FROM LEBANESE CHRISTIANS...

Sirs:

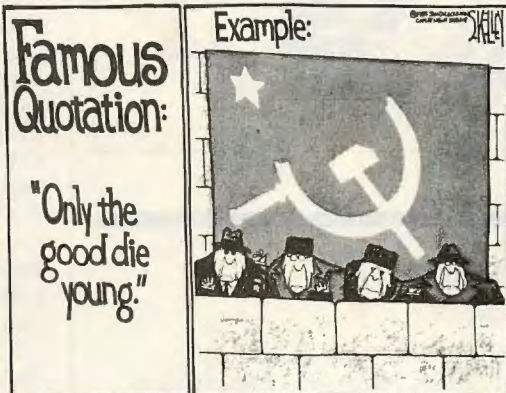
It was with great pleasure that we read your article about Lebanon ("Middle East Update") in the January '85 issue of SOF. It is comforting to know that there are people who still care about the Christian community in Lebanon, and its fight for life and freedom.

Nasri Diab  
Arlington, Virginia

We are very concerned with the ongoing problems in the Middle East and will continue to keep our editorial focus on that area. You have indicated we hit the mark and that's very gratifying.



## FLAK



## MISSING PERSON...

Sirs:

While in Vietnam in 1968, I was recommended for the Bronze Star Medal, along with two other soldiers. Since we were to rotate back to the States before they were presented, we were told the medals were to be forwarded to our next duty stations. Well, the paperwork was lost, and after years of arguing with the Army, writing President Reagan, and contacting my Congressman, this is my last hope. If I can locate the officer that recommended us for the medal and have him verify it with the Army, perhaps we can receive our decorations after 17 years. That officer was: former 1st Lt. David Fransen, S-2, 4/31, 196th LT INF BD, VIETNAM, 1968.

Terrence Janas  
2615 Maple  
Franklin Park, Illinois 60131  
(312) 455-4959

We hope this links you up with the people you are seeking to document your "lost" medal recommendation. Obviously, it's something you deserve and should have.



## THANKS FROM FREE AFGHANISTAN...

Sirs:

Thank you for your generous gift of walkie-talkies and knives. As you are aware, these items are desperately needed in the field and will surely be put to good use. We have come to America to find generous people and organizations like yours who can sympathize with our cause and aid us in our struggle. We hope to ultimately secure the anti-aircraft weapons that we must have to destroy the Soviet Mi-24 Hind helicopters.

Commander Wali Khan  
Brigadier Rahmatullah Safi  
Committee for a Free  
Afghanistan  
Washington, DC

You can rely on the staff of Soldier of Fortune to help when and where we can. Your fight is our fight. Our best wishes in your efforts to obtain anti-aircraft weapons.

## NEWS FROM THE PENTAGON...

Sirs:

I have just retired from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and you may be pleased to know that I have passed to senior Defense officials, several of your articles and even recently included a couple of advertisements in a briefing book. The articles on laws of war ("Merc Work," December '84, "More Mercs and the Law," April '85) were well-done and well-researched. No one knows better than me, as I was the one who did most of the negotiation on that most complex item. Under those meaningless clauses, every uniformed man or woman was a war criminal.

Dwayne S. Anderson  
Vienna, Virginia

Thanks for feeding SOF info along to the hierarchy. We were aware that much of our technical intelligence and situation reports from around the world got before the eyes of Defense leaders, but we weren't sure whether they ran down to the Pentagon newsstand and plunked down their bucks or someone fed them the info. That question is now answered.



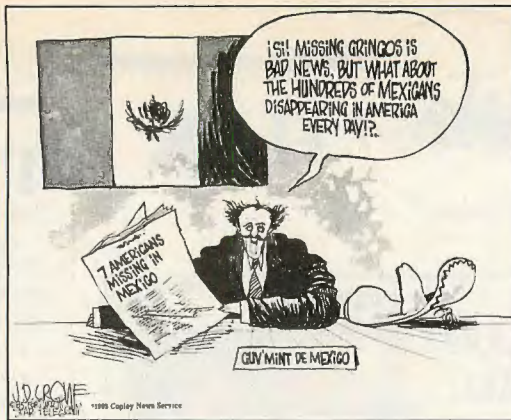
## DIRECTOR APOLOGIZES...

Sirs:

A great deal of thanks are in order for the superb cover story of "Terminator" (SOF, December '84), as it was the best single piece of coverage done on the picture, and certainly the one closest to my heart. However, I owe you and your readers an apology on behalf of the film. The article was directed towards the concept that "Hollywood" is finally taking a responsible approach towards on-screen accuracy with weapons, yet smack in the middle of "Terminator" we see a running fire fight with police-model Remington 12-gauge pumps that fired 14 rounds each in one scene with no reloading. Blame it on editorial license. I bent the rules in favor of the drama, but I've decided that such license is harmful to the enjoyment of those in the audience who know their weapons. I will endeavor to be as rigorously realistic as possible in future action scenes.

James Cameron  
Director,  
"Terminator"

*We're not sure you need to beat your breast so hard. We have received a lot of reader raves regarding the movie and our analysis of it. On the whole, the discrepancies in the shotgun sequence were not so bothersome. We loved the movie.*



## LATIN FEARS IN U.S....

Sirs:

Congratulations on "Who Killed Pedro Chamorro?" (SOF, March '85.) I was living in Costa Rica at the time of the assassination. At that time I told my wife of my suspicions about this incident, which ran parallel to Dr. John Padgett's report. Although Somoza was one of the most hated Latin dictators, I personally considered him a lot more greedy than bloodthirsty, and did not consider Chamorro's murder the type of act that was Somoza's style.

Keep up the good reporting. Despite what the popular media and leftist propagandists would have the public believe, most of the Latins want democracy, not Marxist dictators. As I still have relatives in Central America, please withhold my name and hometown.

An SOF reader in Oregon

*Thanks for the kind words. SOF has followed the situation in Nicaragua very closely since 1979 and will continue to keep the spotlight on Sandinista tyranny until freedom wins out in that country.*

## OLYMPIC KUDOS...

Sirs:

Thank Colonel Brown and your magazine staff for two years of support for my efforts at the 1984 Winter Olympics at Sarajevo, Yugoslavia ("SOF Lends Hand to Olympic Hopeful," November '83). Yours was the *only* Boulder organization to follow talk of support and interest with action, and I owe my Olympic season to your help. The Olympics were typically messed up with only a good relay leg to show. But afterwards, at Mittenwald at the NATO-sponsored German International Biathlon Championships — where the same Olympic field was assembled — I had two top-ten results and a very fine relay.

Don Nielsen  
U.S. Olympic Biathlon Team

*You're welcome. The SOF team considers it an honor and a privilege to help the Olympic cause and a fine competitor.*

## AUTHOR ASKS FOR HELP...

Sirs:

I'm starting a third proposed book on Vietnam. I hope to chronicle the activities of the 1st Marine Division and Americal Division in the Arizona Valley-Que Son Mountain-Hiep Duc Valley area, from 7 June to 7 September 1969. During this period the Marines were involved in several rough battles in the Arizona, then shifted south into the Que Sons to assist the Army, which was fighting the bloody bunker-to-bunker action in the Hiep Duc Valley. Involved units included 2/1, 3/21, 4/31 and 1/46 Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division; plus 1/5, 2/5, 1/7 and 2/7 Marines; 1st Recon Battalion; 1st Tank Battalion; 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and various smaller units.

I would greatly appreciate hearing from any vet of these operations as soon as possible so we can arrange an interview. Call or write me anytime at: 220 Kingsville Court, Webster Groves, MO 63119. (314)961-7577.

Keith William Nolan  
Author, *Battle for Hue: Tet 1968*

## VIETNAM VETS' MEMORIAL...

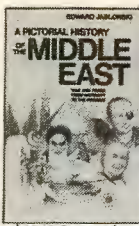
Sirs:

Your article concerning the new memorial ("From Wailing Wall To Hallowed Ground," SOF, March '85) was outstanding. I probably will never be able to visit it personally, but the pictures are just as moving to me. My chest gets heavy and tears swell up in my eyes. Those three troopies remind me of the three friends that died in '69 and '70. To all who served in Nam and those who are now replacing us — keep up the good work. We old soldiers will back you up all the way.

Ricardo Castillo  
Boling, Texas

*Thanks for taking the time to write and for the kind comments regarding our coverage of the dedication of the new Vietnam Veteran's Memorial. We felt it was about time those who served got an appropriate commemoration.* ✕

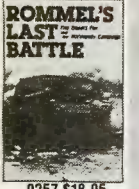




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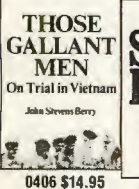
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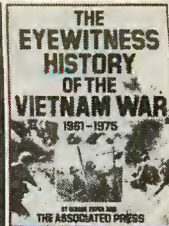
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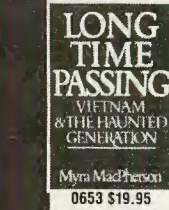
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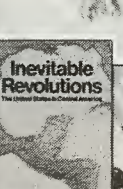
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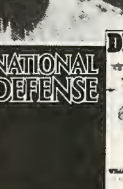
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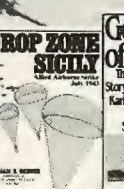
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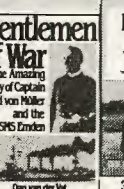
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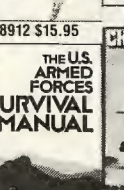
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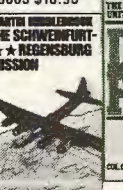
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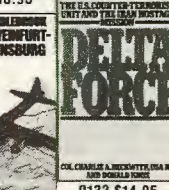
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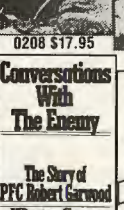
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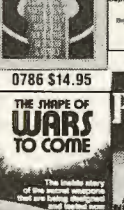
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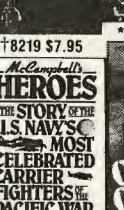
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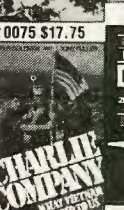
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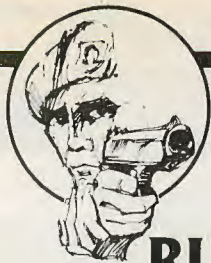
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## I WAS THERE RUSTLER'S REVENGE

by Harold T. Nelson



*Viet Cong and NVA attacks in 1968 threw many young Foreign Service Officers into a variety of roles in small, isolated districts of Vietnam. Despite their officially civilian status, they were sometimes forced by circumstances to become platoon leaders and company commanders, as well as advisers in infantry tactics and helicopter ops. District teams had to do everything from medical assistance and gathering intelligence to adjusting artillery. All that was when they weren't busy as linguists, construction experts, social workers and election commissioners. Harold T. Nelson found himself soldiering as a District Senior Adviser for a month while his military boss was on leave.*

**V**IETNAM, in 1969, was a crime-free society. If you didn't believe it you could just check the statistics. They were compiled from reports that attributed any outburst of violence to VC and any unidentified body as VC killed by government forces. The huge MACV computer complex recognized and categorized all objects and events in military terms. There was nothing in the program concerning civil crimes so there was no civil crime according to American records. And then there was the real world.

In March 1969, I became the civilian Deputy Senior Adviser in an isolated district of the heavily contested Mekong Delta. The mission was to integrate the U.S. military and civilian agencies which supported the Vietnamese pacification program. Advisers

**Water buffalo were a valuable commodity in Vietnam. Photo: DOD (Marine Corps)**

and Vietnamese did have trouble understanding each other, but the real language and cultural barrier was between men in the field and the computer at IV Corps HQ.

Three days after I was appointed to fill in for my boss while he was on leave, my first crisis arose. The MACV computer spat out a report of a sinister "VC assassination incident" in our area. In a message which I read over morning coffee, IV Corps headquarters demanded a full report on the incident. Neither the local American team nor the Vietnamese district staff officers knew anything about it.

A long, dusty jeep ride brought us to the site of the alleged VC assassination. It rapidly became apparent that an old man had been killed while guarding a pair of water buffalo. The buffalo were missing and for some reason the village chief had reported it directly to Province headquarters. They forwarded the report to IV Corps which resulted in the demand for information on what the computer decided was a military crime.

District and national police officers joined me at the scene of the crime. We trudged through the paddies until we finally found the victim. A very old man had been pinned to the ground with an old French bayonet about the length of a short sword.

The sun had now been up for over

*Continued on page 98*



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This provides free admission to all seminars, Combat Weapons Military Expo, the banquet and all convention activities, with the exception of optional events. All conventioners must preregister. Write SOF CONVENTION '85, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. For hotel reservations, call the Sahara Hotel and Casino at (800) 634-6666 or the El Rancho at (702) 796-2222.

**COMBAT WEAPONS MILITARY EXPO** — Weapons, equipment and militaria vendors will display their wares on 20-22 September. Get a close-up, hands-on view of everything from aircraft to SCUBA gear, ammo to armor, and starlight scopes to IR camouflage. For information contact William Weber, 17100 Norwalk Blvd., Suite 116, Cerritos, CA 90701.

**FIREPOWER DEMONSTRATION** — SOF's weapons-demo team will once again stage the rock 'n' roll show on the firing line. Small-arms expert Peter Kokalis will scatter the sand with machine guns of nearly every description. And blast-master John Donovan will demonstrate his explosive toys.

**SEMINARS** — For the less adventurous, SOF will offer a fascinating schedule of seminars. Speakers will conduct information exchanges on such topics as knife fighting, automatic weapons, sniping, the French Foreign Legion, Afghanistan, Central America and the Middle East. And better military intel than you'll get anywhere else without a security clearance. Free to conventioners — \$25 for non-conventioners.

**THREE-GUN MATCH** — SOLDIER OF FORTUNE's action-packed Three-Gun Match, a world-class competition involving skill with pistol, rifle and shotgun will be held at the Desert Sportsman Rifle and Pistol Club, 18-20 September. Entrance is by invitation only and competitors must write for an application. Send SASE to Bill Brooks, 4901 Indian trail, Wilmington, NC 28403.



**PUGIL-STICK TOURNAMENT** — Gather every evening at poolside to see bloodthirsty bayonet fighters swing at each other to XO Dale Dye's exhortations. Five dollars per game will put you in the running. Sign up at the convention.

**OPERATION HEADHUNTER** — Tackle rough desert terrain with this strenuous five-mile military obstacle course. Headhunters must negotiate the course by running, climbing, and rappelling with seven five-pound sandbags on their backs and only with the help of map, compass and knife. Limit 70 conventioners. Only the fit need apply. For information send a large SASE to: ALECTO Group, P.O. Box 253, Elkhorn, NE 68022.

**SCUBA CLASS** — SOF's underwater-demolitions expert John Donovan will conduct SCUBA classes for the beginning diver. All you need is fins, mask and snorkel — we'll provide the rest. Contact John Donovan, P.O. Box 486, Danver, IL 61732 and be PADI certified.





**RAPPELLING SEMINARS** — Professional wall-crawler Fritz Borhardt will once again be leaping and bounding through his exciting rappelling classes. And for those who participated last year and couldn't get enough, a tactical-rappelling class is being offered. Contact Fritz at P.O.Box 548, Nederland, CO 80466. Please send SASE.

**PARACHUTING COURSE** — Would-be winged warriors be warned! The Phantom Airborne Division will be conducting parachuting courses concurrently with the Convention. Two-day course for novices and returning jumpers. For information contact Cliff Albright, Phantom Division, P.O. Box 22505, Memphis, TN 38122.





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# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

## To Frag or Not To Frag

by Harry Claflin



**A** lot of combat veterans — including some at SOF — disagree but I'm no fan of hand grenades. In my opinion, they're heavy, short-of-range, indiscriminate, hard to carry, and only useful in situations you shouldn't be in to begin with. On the plus side of grenades, they are the closest thing to artillery you can carry in your pocket and use without having to wait.

When I was a young Force Recon Marine in Vietnam — fresh out of Laos — I used to fill every available space on my gear with grenades. At times I carried at least a dozen spread around my ruck and webgear. But by the time I left Vietnam, I was down to three smoke grenades — red, green and yellow — and one lonely frag.

Fragmentation grenades can be useful. If you're in a poor defensive position and the bad guys are trying to walk over you, it's nice to interrupt their pace by rolling frags around their ankles. But I don't recommend getting in the habit of using grenades to keep enemy heads down unless you've got the kind of logistics the Marines had at Khe Sanh. Helicopters full of pocket pyrotechnics in all flavors arrived every night. And the Leathernecks on the perimeter threw them at infiltrating NVA like rice at a wedding. I've never seen a photo of a fighting hole at that seige that didn't feature boxes of grenades stacked around it.

I've heard bush veterans say they prefer to use hand grenades as disrupters when they are breaking contact

**Like potted plants on the kitchen sill, grenades decorate the window of this Marine outpost at Con Thien. Photo: USMC**

and the enemy is likely to pursue. I just can't agree with that. If I'm breaking contact from the ranges where a frag might be effective, all the enemy is going to see of me is my back and boot-soles.

In a pinch, I'd toss Willie Peter (White Phosphorus) to slow enemy pursuit. At night it can destroy enemy night vision and there's an instinctive fear of fire that can be handy to provide a head start for your departure from the area.

If I've got the opportunity and equipment, I prefer to block pursuit with fire for the time it takes to set up a trip-wired Claymore. When a pursuing enemy hits that, he'll halt and die in place.

Notice I've only said I don't prefer grenades for open terrain or bush contacts. They are handy and effective in other engagements. Grenades are particularly useful for trench- and bunker-fighting.

Any place you want to go that you can't look into before you get there is the right place for a grenade. A depression in the ground may be a harmless hole or it may be a bunker entry. And it's nearly impossible to absolutely predict which flank will take fire when you jump into a trench. The full-circle

*Continued on page 97*

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**T**HE submachine gun refuses to die. It hovers near death but new prototypes abound and in certain circles sales remain steady — if not brisk. A few of the newcomers to the field get top marks and may keep the genre from disappearing.

The Steyr MPi69/81 series submachine guns are a few of the best of them. They first appeared in the 1960s when a "lightweight" infantry rifle was epitomized by the 9½-pound FN FAL. Like its contemporary, the UZI, the Steyr MPi69 (MaschinenPistole 1969) owes many of its more conspicuous features to the Czech ZK 476 designed by the brothers Koucky and to the Vz 23, 24, 25 and 26 series of Vaclav Holek. But the Steyr MPi69 is far simpler and more innovative than all its predecessors and most of its contemporaries.

The MPi69 fires from the traditional open-bolt position by means of advanced primer ignition with a fixed firing pin. This means that the primer is actually detonated before the cartridge is fully seated in the chamber and while it is moving forward. The cartridge's force of equal and opposite reaction (one of Newton's laws) is thus dissipated in not only overcoming the inertia of the stopped bolt and driving it rearward, but in stopping its forward movement as well. This concept permits designers to use a much lighter bolt.

The MPi69 has a telescoping bolt which permits a longer barrel (10.25 inches), that in turn maintains the pressure peak for a longer interval and thus requires a heavier bolt to delay the pure blowback action. Back to square one.

The cartridge remains inclined to the firing pin/chamber axis until partially chambered and thus the primer cannot be detonated prematurely. Once the tapered chamber and case produce enough drag for the firing pin to crush the primer, ignition will occur. In theory the actual position of firing can be altered by fouling or debris in the chamber and differing lots of ammunition. In general firing occurs with about 0.05 inch separating the front face of the bolt and the chamber face. The wrap-around bolt provides an additional safety margin in the unlikely event of a blown case as the bolt face is halfway along the bolt's overall 6.125-inch length. The rectangular bolt body has shallow longitudinal cuts which collect debris and minimize stoppages under conditions of extreme fouling. Telescoping bolts modify upward climb in burst fire and also enhance pointing characteristics.

That's good news, since the MPi69's magazine well is located in the grip assembly, a feature that necessitates a



## FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

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grip-to-frame angle of 90 degrees. While not as ergonomically satisfying as those of the Beretta M12S or Sterling submachine guns, it leaves the point of balance directly above the grip, provides a firm support for the magazine and aids in rapid magazine changes, using the well-known principle of "hand finds hand." Gratefully, there is no grip safety. The magazine catch release is located at the rear heel of the magazine well. It must be operated with the support hand, which must also withdraw the empty magazine as it will not drop freely.

The all-steel, two-position feed magazines come in two capacities: 25 and 32 rounds. They can be loaded by hand or with a box-type loader. The MPi69 is not ammunition-sensitive and will consume tracer and ball ammunition in all projectile configurations.

Nor will it "double" due to ammunition of reduced ballistic performance because of the bolt's unique multiple sear notches. When fully retracted and firing normal ammunition the sear engages the bolt's front surfaces. Two sets of notches cut into the bottom of the bolt provide two additional bents for sear engagement. Weak ammunition producing short recoil will cause the sear to engage on the bents formed by the first (or forward) set of notches. Partial retraction of the cocking lever or

jarring will cause the bolts on many submachine guns to move rearward just far enough to pick up a round from the magazine and move forward to slam-fire an accidental discharge. This type of movement on the MPi69 is contained by the bents of the second set of bolt notches.

The recoil springs, guide rod and rubber buffer are permanently retained in their bolt channel by a nub on the front end of the guide rod. Early MPi69 submachine guns had a single-recoil firing and a cyclic rate of 550 rpm. Many commando units prefer higher cyclic rates — often for reasons of mystique rather than logic. As a consequence, Steyr has added an outer 1.75-inch accelerator spring which increases the bolt's forward movement without affecting rearward travel. The result is an increase in the cyclic rate to 700 rpm. If you don't like the increased rate (I don't) just remove the accelerator spring.

The bolt group is housed in a stamped-sheet-metal receiver of light-gauge steel formed and welded into a square tube. The ejector is riveted in place. Photographs of early prototypes showed integral mounts on the receiver's top surface to accept the Single-point sight. This was omitted from all production models. A bracket welded to the receiver's bottom guides the

*Continued on page 95*



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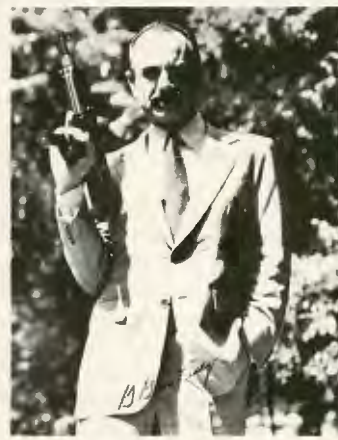
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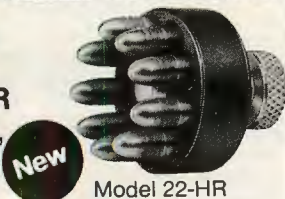
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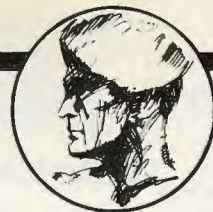
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## IN REVIEW



# THE PENTAGON AND THE ART OF WAR

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AUTHOR OF THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE SOVIET UNION

**EDWARD N. LUTTWAK**

**THE PENTAGON AND THE ART OF WAR.** By Edward N. Luttwak. Simon and Shuster, Dept. SOF, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. 333 pp. \$17.95. Review by Alexander McColl.

**T**HE Pentagon and the Art of War is not going to be welcome reading to the powers-that-be in Washington's defense establishment. Not that it is your standard run-of-the-mill pacifist anti-military tract, but Dr. Luttwak is a devout believer in the importance of effective military power as a source of national security and the preservation of the Free World in the face of the awesome war-machine that the Soviets have built up over the last twenty years. He makes no effort to conceal his displeasure with the status quo.

The key word is "effective." Luttwak's concerns are with effectiveness under the actual grim realities of combat which — as he demonstrates — may or may not have much to do with "efficiency" in the civilian business or bookkeeper's sense of the word. A single air-defense system consisting of guided missiles, control radars, etc., may be more "efficient" than overlapping and parallel systems, each requiring its own specific training program, list of repair parts and so on, but the single system is also much easier for an enemy to learn, understand and eventually neutralize with electronic and tactical counter-measures. Time and

money spent training infantry soldiers in small-unit tactics may be precisely quantified. The quality and realism of the training are something else again and may be degraded for the sake of unrealistic "safety" rules to avoid the hullabaloo that always appears after any serious training accident.

Dr. Luttwak points out a number of areas where there are very great "opportunities for improvement." In each he calls the present situation unsatisfactory and indicates internal reform is no longer possible. Here are a few.

First is what he calls the "materialist bias." That is, the over-emphasis on material, quantifiable things, obsessively examined in minute detail by the Congress and elsewhere, to the near-exclusion of the non-quantifiable but ultimately vital intangibles ranging from national strategy to the leadership, morale and cohesion of small units.

Second is the officer surplus. The plan at the end of World War II was to retain and find jobs for as many field-grade and higher officers as possible so they would be available for a future mobilization. The government hoped that the military would thereby avoid the senior-officer shortage and its associated confusions that attended the earlier stages of our World War II buildup. The result, and this is no new insight of Luttwak's, is the vast, proliferated and duplicating structure of structures upon structures of command and staff, research and development and other bureaucracies. This has led to a tragic and fantastic bureaucratization and over-management of the whole defense establishment, as well as condemning substantially all career officers to years of soul-destroying desk work.

Third is what Luttwak calls the "Research Merry-Go-Round," illustrated by an analysis of the Air Force Systems Command. He explains how the excessive bureaucratization and over-management defeat attainment of simple solutions and result in years of delay and in over-elaborate, over-expensive "systems" that either never get manufactured at all, come into service years too late, and/or in quantities (due to excessive cost) that will force reliance on wholly obsolete weapons after the first volley.

Fourth, with the sole exception of

*Continued on page 99*



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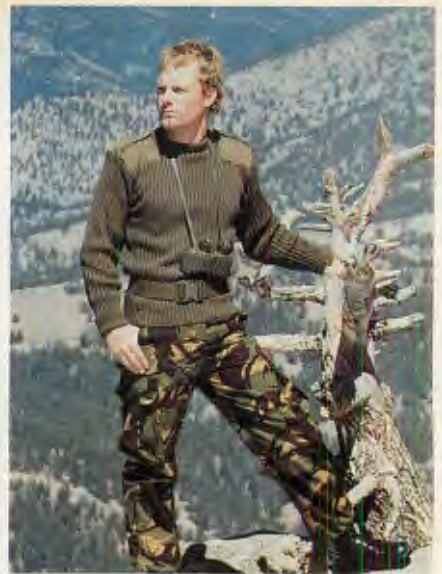
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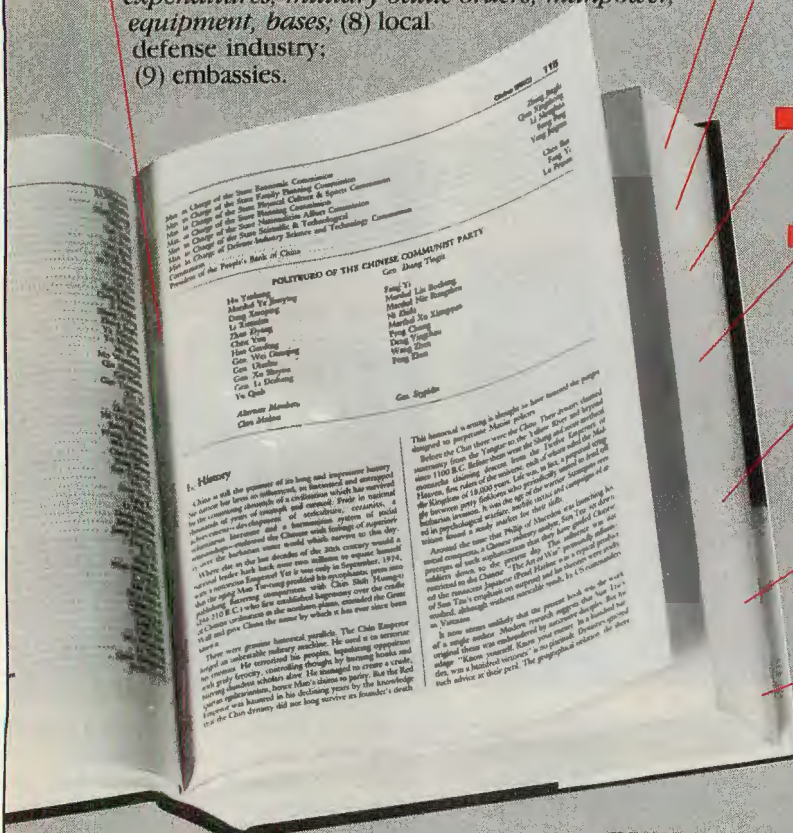
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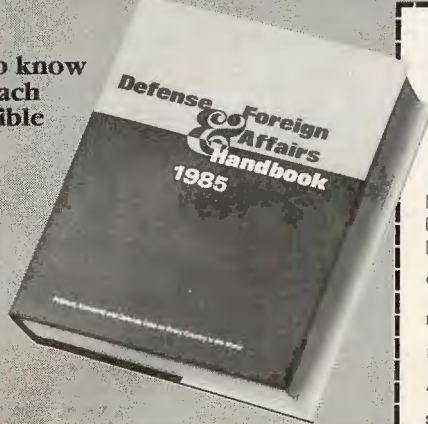
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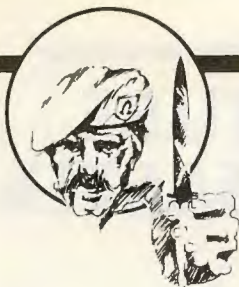
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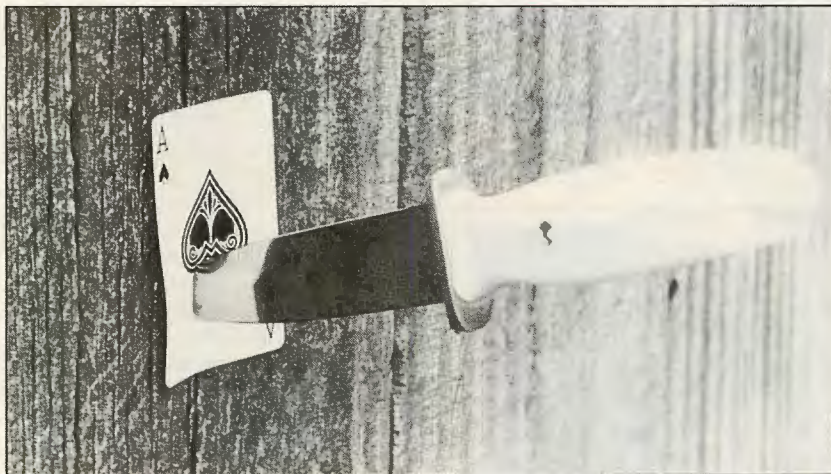




# BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

## Save It For Mumblety-Peg



**P** EOPLE like to throw knives. There is something particularly satisfying about holding a keen edge between your thumb and forefinger and sending it flashing through space to land with a satisfying thud in the center of your intended target.

Kids have been doing it for years and some of them get very good at throwing knives. When I was 12 or 14 years old I could peg a playing card every time from 25 feet. It took a lot of practice but I usually found time for that sort of thing. And then I grew up, did a little studying and stopped throwing knives.

In conversations with professional military men who had seen a lot of combat and were serious about the various available methods to harm an enemy, it quickly became apparent that throwing knives at people was not a particularly effective or efficient way to eliminate them. These pros taught me that throwing a knife at an enemy is a very good way to get yourself shot full of holes, or even killed with your own knife.

Knife-throwing is a good form of recreation. It is not a good combat tactic.

The most common misconception about combat knife-throwing is that an enemy dies if you stick the blade somewhere in his anatomy. He might, but you should not count on it. Unless your blade strikes him squarely in the eye socket and thus penetrates the brain,

Throwing your knife may be your last discard. Photo: Dale Andrade

or catches him in the center of the throat, he is not positively or immediately out of the fight. The operative word is *immediately*.

A thrown blade does not carry the shock power of a bullet. The wound channel made by a thrown knife is very similar to that of an arrow. Bow-hunters have always realized that an animal hit by an arrow very rarely drops in its tracks. They will intentionally wait for at least 30 minutes before tracking or pursuing a wounded animal to give it time to hemorrhage. If they give immediate chase, the animal may be aided by a flow of adrenalin and run for miles before dying. Such an adrenalin rush in a human — wounded by the knife you throw at him — might give him the time and energy to aim and fire or counterattack. That's not what you want.

It is possible to kill a man instantly with a good knife. A blow to the top of the head which splits a skull to the victim's sinuses, or to the back of the neck which severs the spinal cord, will result in immediate death. It is practically impossible to accomplish either of these cuts by throwing a knife at an enemy. What you may accomplish by throwing your knife is one or all of the following things.

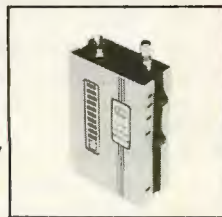
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Combat Sandals do most things as well as most shoes. And if Guevara had known about them, he may have had a different idea about sandals. They're also cheaper than most good shoes and boots at \$38.50 (plus \$1 UPS charge) from Alp Sandals, Dept. SOF, 250 D, N. Hwy. 101, Encinitas, CA 92024.



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## HIGH ANXIETY?

A mercenary friend of ours carried a briefcase everywhere he went. It contained a box of C-rats, pocket first-aid kit, socks, flashlight, whetstone, 6-inch locking pliers, a couple of butane lighters, webbing for a Swiss seat and several carabiners. Asked about the purpose of the web and 'biners, he'd say, "to get out of buildings." Asked where his rope was, he'd say, "I'll find some."

God only knows where he'd find, say, 10 stories of rope, but if he had Bill Forrest's latest invention he'd have it in his briefcase.

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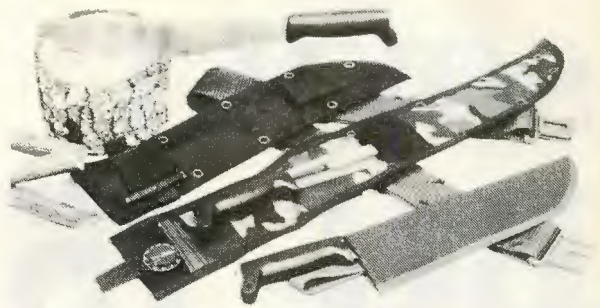
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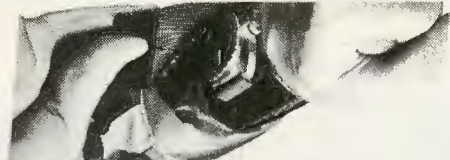
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# SOVIET BG-15

## Kunar Carry-out Bags a Blooper

by David Isby



**I**t was not what any sane Westerner could call a leisurely shopping spree. The merchandise was as scarce as snow in the Sahara and the store was full of Soviet security guards who would gladly blow us away just for entering the bargain basement. But we hadn't come to embattled Kunar Province to go home empty-handed. Thanks to the Afghan Freedom Fighters and their ability to shoplift Soviet hardware from battlefields such as this one, we could cross off the items on our shopping list and head for the check-out counter.

Contemplating the violent mountainside ambush where it was picked up wholesale, I turned a treasure over in my hands. I had never seen the

**New Soviet BG-15 clips on AK to fill same role as U.S. M203.**

weapon before but it was number one on my list of things to scrounge during this trip to Afghanistan. After a difficult trek across the border from Pakistan, the mujahideen had finally handed me a Soviet 7.62mm AKMS assault rifle with an intriguing supplement to its standard firepower. Mounted under the barrel was a 40mm grenade launcher, similar in concept — if not in design — to the familiar U.S. M203 that supplements some American M16 rifles in standard infantry squads. The U.S. version was designed to replace the popular

Vietnam-era "Blooper" or M79 grenade launcher. The Soviet variety is designated the BG-15.

This example was serial number NAB 1121. A previous specimen — serial number NAB 092 — was captured in the Panjsher Valley in 1984, indicating a relatively limited run of the weapon in hands of Soviet forces here in Afghanistan. I had heard of this weapon on our previous visit to the mujahideen and we announced the find in *Soldier of Fortune* ("SOF Counts Coups in Afghanistan," October '84, page 53). Since that break, I had let the Afghans know we were interested in examining a specimen firsthand. This was the response to my request.

Our old mentor, Hassan Gailani, had come through with the hardware. He is the Military Chairman of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA), one of the seven Peshawar-based resistance parties, and a devoted reader of *Soldier of Fortune*. On my last trip, he produced for our examination such previously unknown goodies as the AKR 5.45mm assault rifle and a silencer for an AKMS. Hassan had heard of a spectacular ambush by NIFA guerrillas in the Kunar and noted that the victors had policed up a BG-15. When he heard of our visit, he arranged a liaison between us and the men who had captured the weapon. He had also examined the shopping lists brought along by Major Karen McKay, U.S. Army Reservist and Executive Director of the Committee for a Free Afghanistan. She was as anxious to get her hands on the BG-15 as I was.

Hassan was the linch-pin for our foray into technical intelligence but an important fixer on the trip was Brigadier Ramatullah Safi, one-time Chief of Special Forces, Royal Afghan Army, who had done a tour with Great Britain's Special Air Service, attended the Soviet Army Mountain Warfare School, and been an unwilling guest in one of the Kabul regime's prisons. Safi met us in Peshawar after his return from another trip involving ordnance. He had delivered several hundred rounds of ammo to the communist garrison at Khost through the muzzles of some Chinese-made 82mm and British three-inch mortars. As he had personally trained the guerrillas who ambushed the Soviets in Kunar Province and captured these weapons, Safi had an interest in seeing the results of his work.

The BG-15 was waiting for us at our destination, where it had been carried rolled in a carpet. The Afghans who had brought it were the mujahideen from Kunar. There were a few graybeards with their Lee Enfields — men who had grown up in the old ways of the Pathan — but most were young men, armed with Kalashnikovs that they carried with assurance. One had a traditional Khyber knife stuck in his belt. The craftsmen who made these belong to the

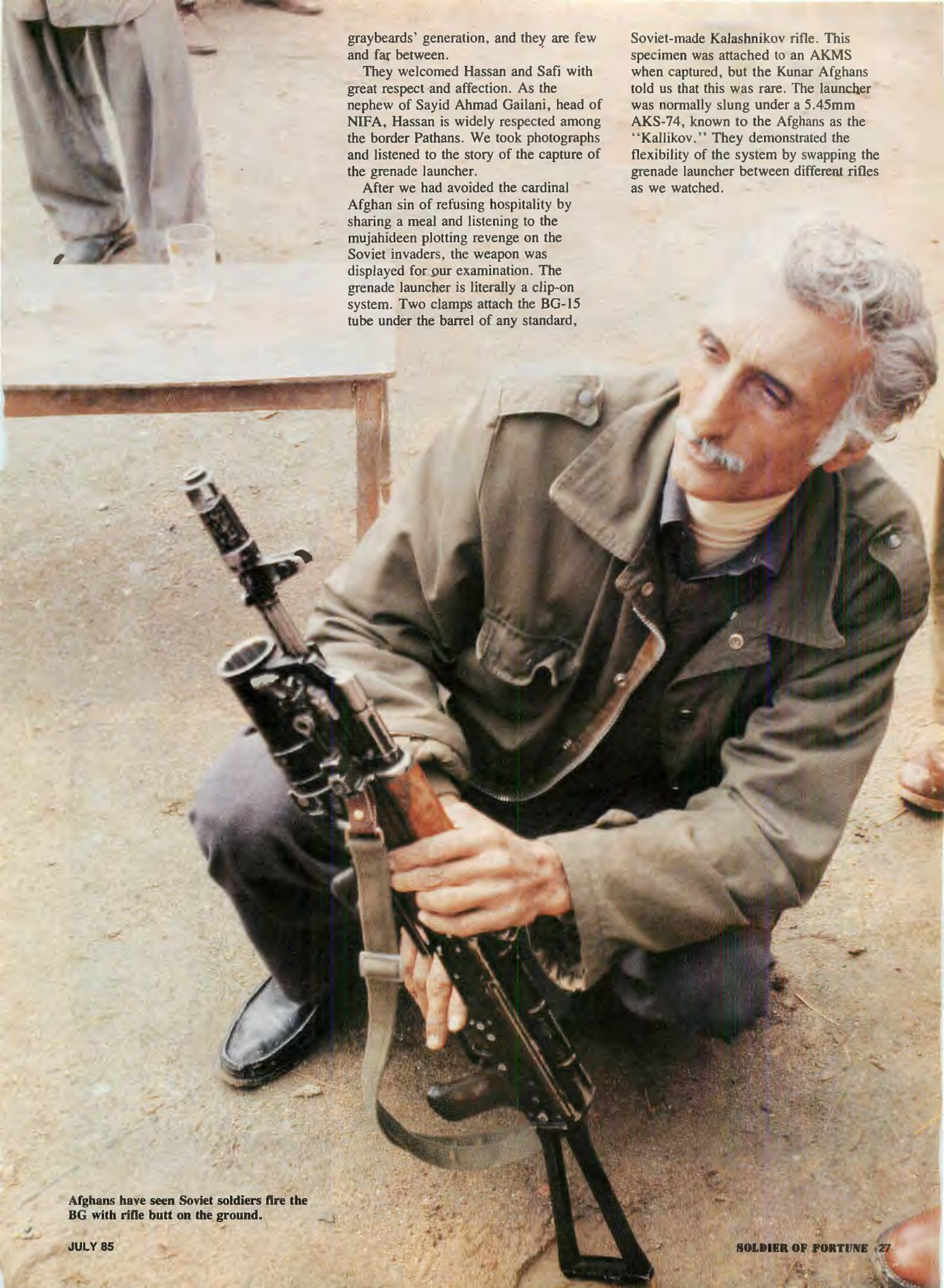


graybeards' generation, and they are few and far between.

They welcomed Hassan and Safi with great respect and affection. As the nephew of Sayid Ahmad Gailani, head of NIFA, Hassan is widely respected among the border Pathans. We took photographs and listened to the story of the capture of the grenade launcher.

After we had avoided the cardinal Afghan sin of refusing hospitality by sharing a meal and listening to the mujahideen plotting revenge on the Soviet invaders, the weapon was displayed for our examination. The grenade launcher is literally a clip-on system. Two clamps attach the BG-15 tube under the barrel of any standard,

Soviet-made Kalashnikov rifle. This specimen was attached to an AKMS when captured, but the Kunar Afghans told us that this was rare. The launcher was normally slung under a 5.45mm AKS-74, known to the Afghans as the "Kallikov." They demonstrated the flexibility of the system by swapping the grenade launcher between different rifles as we watched.



Afghans have seen Soviet soldiers fire the BG with rifle butt on the ground.





When I first encountered the AKR short 5.45mm assault rifle on my travels with the Afghans last year, it had simply proved to be the standard Kalashnikov in a new package. The BG-15 grenade launcher is a different story. While it bears a conceptual similarity to the M203 it is obviously not an attempt to copy a proven product.

It is a short-barreled system — slightly over 12 inches from pistol grip to bore — with a trigger mounted below the forward hand grip of the AK-series weapons. A hole for the thumb of the firing hand is drilled through a stubby pistol grip located just behind the trigger

Soviet grenade-launcher trigger mechanism is simple, robust and protected.



mechanism. Forward of that is the launcher tube which is just over five inches long. The BG-15 is fired by right-handed shooters with the trigger hand at the pistol grip and the left hand placed forward on the tube.

A rifled muzzle-loader, the BG-15 grenade launcher is fitted to fire 40mm ammo, but it's unlikely Soviet troopers will be launching captured M79 or M203 rounds back at friendlies in a fire fight. The Soviet launch system is too dissimilar. Where the U.S. round resembles a giant shotgun shell, the Soviet 40mm grenade has a perforated tail at its base which contains the

Serial number on latest launcher was very close to previously captured BG-15.



## SPECIFICATIONS

	BG-15	M203
<b>LAUNCHER</b>		
<b>Weight:</b>	2 lbs.*	3 lbs.
<b>Length:</b>	11 inches	15.5 inches
<b>Bore diameter:</b>	40mm (1.6 inches)	40mm (1.6 inches)
<b>Action:</b>	muzzle-loading single-shot	breech-loading single-shot
<b>Barrel:</b>	5.5-inch rifled	12-inch smoothbore
<b>AMMUNITION</b>		
<b>Weight:</b>	4 lb.*	.6 lb.
<b>Range:</b>	400 yards*	400 yards
<b>Variants:</b>	high explosive (no other reported)*	over 30 types from HE and shot to VT fuse and smoke

\*Because of lack of ammunition and the absence of weighing scales, these data are either approximate or conjectural.





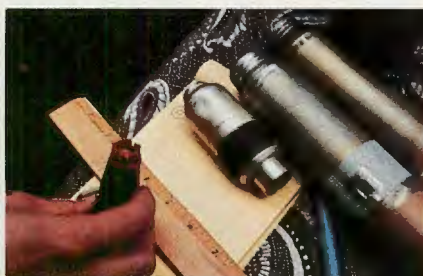
Mujahid commander shows the direct-fire hold for the BG-15.

propelling charge. This tail fits into a recess at the butt end of the grenade launcher tube. The first of a series of bore-riding metal rings at the base of the round is grooved to mate with the tube's rifling, provide a seal for propellant gases and initiate spin. When the trigger is pulled, the firing pin of the launcher strikes a percussion cap in the tail of the round igniting the propelling charge and launching the grenade. Unlike the M79 or M203 system, the entire round is launched. There is no cartridge case to be ejected from the system after firing. To date, only high explosive rounds have been observed fired from the BG-15.

The launcher sights are unduly complicated. Mounted on the left side of the BG-15 system, they can be partially obscured by the forward sling-swivel assembly when a standard sling is mounted and the shooter is under pressure. They remain folded away until the grenadier is ready to launch. At that point he is required to unfold a rear leaf-type sight with V-notch resembling the normal sight on an AKM and a forward frame featuring an oblong aperture topped by an adjustable, unguarded post sight. This post is similar to the standard AK threaded front-sight post.

To shift the sight for various ranges, the grenadier adjusts the entire assembly vertically through a series of detents marked in white as "2" and "3" — presumably, 200 and 300 meters. (Safi indicated 300 meters was considered the BG-15's maximum effective range.) An extreme elevation detent appears on the sight and is marked in red as "42." The Soviets may consider the max range somewhere out around 420 meters. For direct fire — usually at targets inside 200 meter ranges — the weapon is likely fired using the host rifle's standard sights.

Soviet parachute flares showed up in haul that included BG-15.




Mujahid shows fuse-end of Soviet 40mm grenade.



Unlike U.S. M203 and M79 ammo, BG-15 grenades hold propellant in a perforated base attached to the grenade.







Soviet grenadiers are apparently trained to fire the BG-15 using the off (left) eye and acquiring a general sight picture through the oblong frame of the launcher's front sight. They then refine the sight alignment by placing the launcher's front-sight blade in the notch of the rear sight and squeeze off the round.

The BG-15 is rated as having a stiff recoil. While it is clearly designed for firing from the shoulder, Afghans said they had seen the weapon used while being propped on the ground in much the same manner as American troops were taught to fire rifle grenades from the M1 or M14 rifles at extreme elevations.

Test-firing of this weapon is currently being conducted.

Handling the BG-15 assembly with practiced expertise, Safi indicated he had been on the receiving end of grenade attacks down in Paktia. He said it was somewhat like

*Continued on page 76*



## ON THE TRAIL OF THE BG-15

The road from Asmar to Barikot in Afghanistan's Kunar province snakes through a steep valley alongside the cool, blue-green waters of the broad Kunar River. These days it is outlined by burned-out truck hulks and the occasional skeleton of a Soviet armored personnel carrier. To combat veterans, it's not an unfamiliar situation.

Guerrilla conflicts may differ but the roads that serve as main arteries through the killing ground are always similar. Route 1 in South Vietnam, the Street Without Joy in French Indochina, or Ambush Alley in County Tyrone, Ulster, they are all hashmarks of terror. Each curve is an ambush, each bump is a mine. It's the same along the Asmar-Barikot road in Kunar.

The troops of the Kabul regime normally escorted the convoys that fought their way along this blacktop ribbon of death. Armed men in khaki uniforms got so skittish when assigned to escort duty they frequently deserted to join the guerrilla ranks shortly after an ambush was sprung. Others resisted with traditional Afghan ferocity. One of the greatest tragedies of the war is that good men die needlessly for the quisling Babrak Karmal.

Kunar province is on the frontier and borders Pakistan north of the Khyber Pass. It is remote and rebellious even by Afghan standards. That's saying a great deal. Back in the 1940s — back when the Afghans say it was springtime all year long and life was good — a widespread rebellion brought the Royal Afghan Army into Kunar with aircraft and artillery. The Soviets, knowing a potentially endless battle when they see one, normally did not commit their own troops to the Kunar. They regarded it as a sideshow, away from the cities and airfields they considered important.

All that changed in mid-January 1985. Moving fast, the Soviets deployed into the border provinces. Moving mostly by helicopter into Kunar, Nangahar and Paktia provinces on the Pakistani border, the Soviet Army had apparently decided it was time to disrupt the guerrilla infiltration routes and relieve besieged outposts such as the one at Barikot, manned by Kabul-regime troops and Soviet advisers. Under virtual siege by the mujahideen, Barikot could only be resupplied by air. That situation had to end and the Soviets also wanted to put pressure on Pakistan which was in the throes of its first election in many years.

Starting at 1200 on 26 January 1985, elements of two Kabul-regime divisions — the locally-based 9th Division and the 11th Division from Nangahar Province — pushed northward to Asmar and from



there to Barikot. They were not without support. Columns of camouflaged T-62 main battle tanks and BMP infantry fighting vehicles clanked past the wreckage of their predecessors on the Asmar-Barikot road. Fighter-bombers roared in from Kabul and Bagram airfields, striking villages near the road to interdict guerrilla staging areas. Overhead were the Mi-24 Hind attack helicopters and Mi-8 Hip transport ships, themselves heavily armed. When the Mi-8s touched down, the troopers moved out. Fit young men in camouflage smocks moved swiftly over the rocky terrain.

It was not until 1 February that this force — estimated at 3,000 Kabul-regime soldiers, 3,000 militiamen, and about 2,000 Soviets with 120 armored vehicles — fought their way through to Asmar, garrisoned by 4,000 Kabul-regime soldiers and six Soviet advisers. Getting to their jumping-off point had cost them five days and dozens of casualties. Now, the full, awesome panoply of the Russian Army was moving slowly yet inexorably toward Barikot. It was all thoroughly planned. Nothing had been left to chance.

The guerrillas were making their own plans to resist. A thousand mujahideen were deployed between the Soviets and their objective. Another three to four thousand could reach the objective area in a hurry if they were needed. Kunar, near the border, can be reinforced by the guerrillas relatively quickly. The guerrillas included members of all the Peshawar-based parties. Differences were put aside for the duration of the crisis.

To secure the flanks of the armored column the Soviets used helicopter-dropped anti-personnel mines. Detachments would also take up positions on the crests of the ridges that ran on both sides of the road. Sometimes they would clamber up from the road, covered only part of the way by the guns of the tanks and BMPs — the limited elevation of their armament reflects their design for a war in a country that is not as vertical as Afghanistan. Frequently, the Soviets would insert these covering detachments by helicopter, extracting them as the column passed.

**Mounted BG-15 — held by Karen McKay — shows how little bulk Russia's new grenade launcher adds to AK-74.**

The Afghans call the men who came out of the helicopters to secure the flanks of the armored column *commandon* — the Pushtu word borrowed from English. They were, they say, not like the Soviet soldiers, in roadbound columns, who stick to their armored vehicles and show a reluctance to meet the Afghans among their native rocks and hills, where every path is a trap for the unwary and a highway for the adept. Instead, the *commandon* bring the war to the Afghans, up along the ridges or in the remote villages.

The column approached the village of Jelala, about eight kilometers north of Asmar, on 2 February. One of these detachments, inserted by an Mi-8, moved to take up a defensive position near the highway. The Afghans were waiting, between the obvious helicopter landing zone and the crest. Like the men they were waiting for, they were changed from those who had fought the opening battles of the war, five long years before. These were not the local farmers with heirloom rifles, but trained guerrillas with new, clean, Kalashnikovs and full bandoliers, deployed in an L-shaped ambush. As ordered, they held their fire until the *commandon* were close, very close.

The surviving Soviets managed to break contact in a mad minute of automatic and RPG fire and fled back to the LZ. The Afghans knew that now the Hinds would come, and not one village but many villages would be bombed and strafed. They also knew that more *commandons* would come, and knew what they would do to the men who had ambushed their friends if they should catch them in the same place. So, quickly policing up the weapons, the motionless, camouflaged forms remaining in the kill zone, the Afghans moved on to another position.

The BG-15 I saw was taken from one of those Russian bodies.

— David Isby



# BUSH BOBBIES



## Rhodesia's British South Africa Police

by Mick Doyle

OPs set by BSAP patrols monitored terror movement. Photo: Rhodesian Ministry of Information



**F**OUR KIA. That was the official total of casualties when the British South Africa Police attacked a Selous Scouts patrol. Fortunately for all concerned, there was a plausible explanation: The BSAP hadn't meant to fire on Scouts. What would you expect from bush veterans who finally track down what they think is a group of known terrors and find them partying around the campfire making tempting targets of themselves? Flickering firelight and fear do not make for rapid, reliable identification.

In the aftermath, no one could blame the BSAP. Running down and shooting up terrors was our job. We were bound to do it well that morning in 1978 when a retired BSAP Sergeant Major phoned in a terrorist sighting

### AFRICAN ADVENTURER

Mick Doyle is a very private, widely traveled Australian.

to our base camp. Our Police Anti-Terrorist Unit (PATU) took the call at Hartley Police Camp, about 200 klicks southwest of Salisbury. The retired veteran assured us rebels were settling in near Hartley.

Inspector Ron Strang was duty officer at Hartley that day. He got on the radio, called in his reservist PATU men from their farms and issued a warning order to his regulars for a quick patrol. Within half an hour we had assembled several PATU sticks, been briefed, drawn the necessary equipment and



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formed a convoy to head for the enemy-held African township.

A few safe clicks from the target area, we climbed off mine-proofed trucks and advanced in tight wedge formation through the bush. Since our patrol was bound to have some dealings with villagers, Inspector Strang insured it contained both black and white officers. A party of the former moved forward to scout when they approached the township tagged as a new terrorist base. The rest of us in the main force holed up and posted pickets.

When the black policemen returned from their recon, they confirmed the old sergeant-major's report. They had spotted the terrors at a huge piss-up. The beer was flowing like spring water.

Everyone checked equipment and got ready to rid Rhodesia of another communist rebel band. Our PATU sticks swung into an extended line and swept toward the hostile township. From the earlier visit by the black PATU patrolmen, the villagers had figured something was in the wind. They had quietly cleared out of the area and apparently gave no warning to the terrors.

Cautiously, we moved the sweep line forward, entered the darkened village and advanced on the terrorist party. We could see men grouped around a blaring record player, carousing with teenage women and swilling from buckets of beer.

"Easy meat." One of the PATU patrolmen whispered and motioned for the assault.

Snap-shooting our FALs from the shoulder, we swept through the terrors. It was easy meat as predicted. We cut into them like a buzz-saw and turned to change magazines when we had cleared the contact area. Leaving a defensive perimeter on the far side of the kill-zone, we sent patrolmen back in to check the damage. We had taken them completely by surprise. There had been no friendly casualties.

Wounded terrorists screamed and pleaded for mercy . . . some tried to pretend they were Rhodesian soldiers. They were wasting their time with men who'd seen the quality of rebel mercy for innocent women and children both black and white. The wounded were turned into KIAs with quick head shots. We stripped the bodies and recovered what we suspected were important enemy documents.

We policed up the bodies and their Soviet weapons, marched to meet our transport and headed for Hartley Police Camp. Regular and reserve policemen commenced a piss-up of their own to celebrate the victory. The next morning we got the shocking news.

Major Stewart, a senior officer of the Selous Scouts, visited Hartley Police Camp and gathered the victorious PATU men for a confidential briefing. He said some of the "terrors" we had killed the day before were, in fact, Selous Scouts. One of the men had been a Bronze Cross winner and among the most reliable men in the celebrated unit.

We were shocked. Our officers attempted apologies but Stewart insisted they were not



"P.C.G." — the Police Cross for Conspicuous Gallantry, which was the highest award of the British South Africa Police.



Police Decoration for Gallantry was second-highest BSAP award.



BSAP patch for graduates of mandatory Police Anti-Terrorist Unit. Photo: Mick Doyle

RIGHT: BSAP's equivalent of SWAT: the Urban Emergency Unit. Photo: *The Outpost*

necessary. He had investigated the incident and discovered his Selous Scout patrol — composed entirely of black troopers who could easily be mistaken for terrorists in their unorthodox bush kit — had been in the wrong area. A white Scouts officer responsible for the patrol had made a tragic map-reading error. Stewart was professional enough to end the briefing with compliments on our professionalism. It didn't help much.

The Major left Hartley camp and took his dead Selous Scouts home for burial by their Regiment. We were left with another brutal example of how difficult and confusing the war to save Rhodesia had become. Soldiers paid dearly for any mistake in the bush.

The war was particularly tough on policemen who operated like soldiers but under slightly different mandates. That was no great revelation for the men of BSAP. We were the only police "regiment" of the British Empire or its subsequent colonies. The unit was founded as a 500-man security force by Cecil Rhodes, the man for whom Rhodesia was named. The BSAP had been on the sharp end of wars and anti-terrorist activities in Africa since it was founded in the late 1880s as the private security force of the chartered British South Africa Company.

We had been granted the status of a Regiment of the British Empire by King Edward VII for our part in the fighting during the Cape Colony, Mafeking, Rhodesia, and Transvaal campaigns of the Boer War. Regimental tradition was still very much alive when I was appointed as a patrol officer in the British South Africa Police in 1976. It was more like joining a British Cavalry Regiment of the 1920s than a modern police force.

On joining, a recruit patrol officer did six months of initial training including four weeks OJT. In wartime Rhodesia, that meant on-the-job training in the bush where mistakes were marked with a bullet or shrapnel scar. Our training as policemen was an odd mixture of harsh reality and what seemed like irrelevant fantasy. We were just beginning to feel like real bush-beasts when the regimental commander called our training unit in for horseback riding lessons.

That's the way things worked in the BSAP. "Gentlemen will ride!" They will also run until their bloody legs are ready to fall off. The BSAP's unique form of ball-busting PT included the standard tourist jaunt of Salisbury each day: on foot, at the double, with heavy logs over our shoulders.

It was hard for many of us to see how close-order drill — or "square-bashing" — would help us become better policemen. Still we sweated through ceremonial drill at Light Infantry pace. Under the heading of "musketry" we got training on everything but the musket. We learned to handle and maintain the FN FAL, UZI, Walther P-38, riot guns and LMGs, assorted mines, Clay-







mores and the 60mm mortar. Then came visual tracking, African languages, combat medicine, and control of close air support. Morris Depot turned out soldiers who happened to wear a badge.

After passing out of training at the depot, the shiny-new patrol officer could expect to be posted to any one of Rhodesia's five provinces. Each Province had a Police Anti-Terrorist Unit and it was mandatory for all regular patrol officers to be PATU members despite the work-load from his regular assignment. That meant more training.

Before being accepted into PATU, all applicants, both regular and reservist, had to successfully complete the PATU selection course. If a reservist failed to make grade, he could laugh it off and return to his police reserve unit. But a regular who failed was required to return and keep at it until he got it right.

Advanced training courses were run by PATU in each province on an as-required basis. They included squad leadership, heavy weapons, enemy weapons, advanced land navigation, advanced combat medicine, and refresher COIN sessions for all PATU sticks before a six-week bush trip billed as a graduation exercise.

PATU officers were generally a unique breed of bush cat. I remember the PATU CO for Operation Grapple in the Midlands Province war zone. He was a nasty little Irishman — an ex-Brit Parachute Regiment type — who delighted in making life unnecessarily miserable at his selection course in Selukwe south of Gwelo. Like most of his contemporaries, he turned out a superior product from his training courses and he made a point of going on ops as often as he could.

We had several Americans in the PATU units of the BSAP. There was Mike Breen, a North Carolina native who had served in Vietnam as a Special Forces medic. He ran the PATU detachments operating out of Gatooma and was also heavily involved in Operation Grapple. Mike was well-liked. Not only was his training realistic and enjoyable, but he also made a habit of regularly going on deployments to keep his own skills up to par.

All BSAP regulars on postings to District (bush) Police Camps were constantly on standby for a PATU call-out. And the regulars in the "town police" did their six-week PATU bush trips — together with BSAP reservists — alternating from six weeks in town on routine police work.

PATU was formed in 1966 and was the brain-child of a senior police officer named Bill Bailey, formerly of the Long Range Desert Group. PATU sticks were five-man volunteer units that served part-time. They were usually composed of four Europeans (regulars and reservists) and an African policeman (tracker/interpreter).

A PATU stick's equipment included a light machine gun (usually a 7.62mm NATO converted Bren, heavy-barreled FN FAL or a captured communist RPD), South African R1 rifles (FN FAL), rifle grenades





**LEFT: "Rhodesian Navy" — actually a BSAP boat patrol — loads for patrol on Lake Kariba. Photo: *The Outpost***

(Zulu 42 HE frags and the "flying phos" or WP), hand grenades (Mark 2s and the universal favorite — White Phos), full medic pack (including drips and drugs) and a radio. In common with all Security Forces units, the stick leader carried the radio and often the medic pack too.

The reason the Rhodesians all operated in "sticks" of about a half-squad was simple and pragmatic. That number was all an Alouette helicopter could carry. They were effective despite the lack of manpower. With the firepower of an MG and the tactical control afforded by a radio, a stick was a formidable combat unit capable of both independent and coordinated action.

The role of PATU included clandestine OPs (observation posts), aggressive infantry patrolling by day, routine ambushing by night, and reacting to terrorist incidents within the province where they worked. PATU sticks were involved in a number of significant actions and their members were frequently recognized for heroic performance in combat.

The Police Cross for Conspicuous Gallantry (PCG) was the highest award the BSAP could give for heroism in action against the enemy. Only four were ever awarded and one went to a PATU member. Patrol Officer Derrick Edwards, a native-born Rhodesian, won the PCG while on patrol in 1977.

His stick was crossing open ground when they came under fire from a terrorist band. One of his comrades was wounded and fell in an exposed position. Derrick broke cover and braved intense fire to retrieve him and save his life. He was wounded in the thigh but still managed to crawl out of the kill-zone dragging his buddy with him. He then returned to the open ground where he was hit twice more but still managed to recover the stick's precious radio. Derrick refused morphine insisting it should be used for the man he had saved and used the radio to summon Casevac. It was not an unusual situation for a BSAP officer serving with PATU.

The BSAP had toughness, tradition and experience. We'd made our bones in combat but there was more to the units than simple combat muscle. Military intelligence operations in Rhodesia were almost entirely a BSAP show. The Army's infant Rhodesian Intelligence Corps was not formed until late in the war. They were unable to do much more than keep the various commanders' maps marked and up-to-date with intel coming in from SB (Special Branch) and CID (Criminal Investigation Department) units of the BSAP.

The job assigned SB and CID detachments was particularly hazardous. Many

**LEFT: Rhodie civilian convoys were well-known, but few knew the BSAP ran and protected them. Photo: *The Outpost* (BSAP magazine)**



**BSAP on parade; author is second from the CO's right. Photo: courtesy Mick Doyle**

**Rhodesian terrors were better-armed and dressed — by the communists, of course — than most African rebel groups. Photo: courtesy Mick Doyle**



policemen were KIA while sneaking into villages at night to snatch enemy sympathizers for interrogation. Others were ambushed by terrors while visiting informers. SB and CID both maintained members on full-time field intelligence work. They also rotated other detectives from police work in the towns, to the bush for six-week deployments. Because of the network built up over many years of war and peace the BSAP was able to provide invaluable information to Combined Operations on a regular basis.

This effort was further supplemented by

the Police Forensic Science Office. Spent AK cartridges were always collected from the scene of every terrorist incident and submitted to that office for microscopic examination and evaluation. Apparently every individual weapon's firing pin strikes a cartridge differently, and in this way it is possible to identify each weapon individually and trace the movement of that weapon — and the terrorist band of which it was part — from incident to incident. This allowed SB and CID to observe terrorist movement patterns and alert area security for possible attacks. Enemy weapons recovered from successful contacts allowed the forensic scientists to identify the weapon with a particular gang which further enhanced the intel picture.

Field reservists of the BSAP did invaluable work through the last years of the Rhodesian war. While many police reservists served in the horse-mounted and PATU detachments, the Police Reservist Air Wing, the Marine Division of the Rhodesian Navy, the "A" Reserve, and the various Specialist Units (armorers, radio technicians, mortar mechanics), most were the field reserve. It was these field reservists who freed so many regular policemen and soldiers from the necessary, but less demanding, duties of manning road blocks and protecting installations. They also served in the bush at remote police camps as drivers, radio operators, supervisors of local African labor units and in general garrison duties; again freeing the younger regular and national service policemen for operational duties against the terrorists.

Late in the war, following terrorist bomb incidents in the city of Salisbury in 1977, cordon and search operations were initiated on a daily basis. These delicate and dangerous operations were generally commanded by BSAP regulars and executed by reservists.

I recall one incident where a field reservist was guarding a ranch in the Operational Area and was subsequently decorated with the Police Decoration for Gallantry (the BSAP's lesser medal for valor).

Field reservist Marc de Robillard was on duty at the ranch on 30 October 1976 when three terrorists armed with rifles and fixed bayonets entered the homestead. He was unarmed but immediately engaged the nearest terrorist. With his left hand he grabbed the terrorist's rifle by the bayonet and with his right hand he grabbed the butt and attempted to get possession. The terrorist fired the rifle, shooting off four fingers of the field reservist's left hand. But by retaining his grip with his right hand, field reservist de Robillard disarmed the terrorist.

Using the captured weapon he engaged the other two terrorists who were firing inside the house, forcing all three to flee. Undeterred by his injury, de Robillard then armed himself with his own rifle, cocked it with his foot and again engaged the terrorists, who were still firing. He wounded one, causing him to abandon his weapon. Out-

**Continued on page 80**



# HIND HUNTERS

## SOF Trains FDN in Anti-Helo Ops

Text and photos by James L. Pate

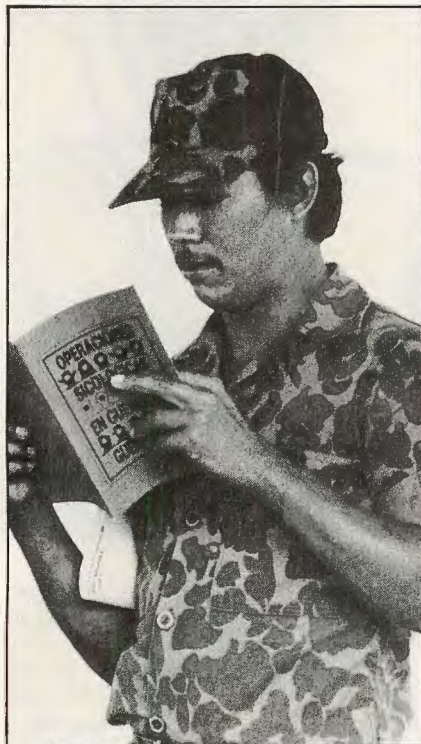
*"They say that the resistance movement in northern Nicaragua is made up mainly of those who used to belong to Somoza's National Guard. There may have been some validity to that in the beginning. But it is no longer true. . . . We are a strong army with a very broad base of support. With or without the U.S. government, you can't deny our existence. We are a reality. We have a strong military infrastructure. And we will not simply go away."*

— Colonel Enrique Bermudez,  
Commanding  
Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN)



**D**EELY rutted and treacherously slippery, the clay ribbon snaking through tropical mountain rainforests is a lame excuse for a road. It rollercoasters through Honduran hinterlands toward Nicaragua's northern border, disappearing into most rivers and creeks in its path, always emerging on the opposite bank. But for thousands of Nicaraguan refugees sworn to regain their homeland — and a few U.S. volunteers — this muddy path is a Crusader Causeway to Glory: Victory or Death

Our dark-skinned Indian driver has the classic look of a Third World guerrilla fighter. With an AK-47 at his side and long, black hair flowing from under a jaunty black beret, he reminds me of Ché Guevara. Dale Dye, SOF's Executive Editor, and I begin calling him "Ché." But we don't let him in on our private joke, one that helps ease the dark, droning boredom on the rugged nighttime sojourn from Tegucigalpa to the Nicaraguan frontier. As a dedicated member of the FDN, it is doubtful "Ché" would be amused by his likeness to the Marxist folk hero.



With a folded copy of SOF's anti-helo ops publication under his arm, this FDN Special Forces squad leader is absorbed in a reprint of the CIA guerrilla-warfare manual distributed through the good graces of Bob Brown.

Our eight-hour trip to the FDN's AO has some interesting features. Relief from our bruising ride in the back of the old, unmuffled jeep turns to tension soon after we leave the first mountain range and enter a stretch of relatively flat, straight road. "Ché" cuts the lights, pushes the throttle toward full bore and we careen loudly through the darkness. Our interpreter, Payo, explains that we are in a no-man's land, literally riding on the edge along a stretch of road called "Blood Alley."

Occupying the ridge overlooking the road to our immediate left are Honduran artillery positions. Across the clear, flat savannah to our right Russian-equipped troops of Nicaragua's communist regime are dug in on a heavily forested rise. As we approach the bottom of one particularly long dip in the road, Payo points out the spot where on 21 June 1983, Dial Torgerson of the *Los Angeles Times* and Richard Cross, a freelance photographer, were killed when their jeep hit a mine. I briefly flip on my red-lensed flashlight to look at the rusting floor of the jeep. No armor there. I wish I had a helmet and flak jacket — to sit on.

We clear our last military checkpoint in Las Trojes, back on relatively safe ground, and head out of the little farm village back into the mountains. Just three days before, two U.S. State Department personnel headed for the FDN front in northern Nicaragua were turned back to Tegucigalpa at this roadblock. Access to the camps by journalists has also been limited.

But our SOF team — myself, Dye and Special Projects Director Alex McColl — have something the FDN badly wants, intelligence on field-expedient methods for taking out the Soviets' deadly Mi-24 helicopter gunship. That makes wafting us through a matter of priority for them.





**Commandante Gustavo fires H&K flare launcher as Dye and FDN Special Forces unit watch.**

There have been reports regarding the FDN's possession of an unspecified type and number of surface-to-air missiles for knocking down Mi-24s, NATO codename "Hind." But we never see nor hear mention of the SAMs while in the camps. Whatever the case, the FDN's special-operations unit, Echo Company, is anxious for our training.

Despite the late hour, difficult route and general danger of traveling in a war zone, we pass more and more *campesinos* trudging up the muddy mountain road as we approach the border area. Many are carrying small bundles on their backs. We learn later that these poor farmers, some Sandinista deserters and many war orphans and draft dodgers from Nicaragua are headed to a nearby FDN enlistment camp. They intend to join in the fight against the communist *piricuacos*.

Payo says the driver has estimated we have only another two or three hours before reaching our destination.

#### ACROSS THE RIO COCO

**D**AWN breaks like a fiery egg dropping into a skillet. It oozes between the mountaintops and over the fog-veiled valley to the east. Caked almost from head to toe in heavy clay mud after mining a road-construction site, the seven commandos lie still, itching to complete their mission and get back to camp. Five days in the jungle have been rough. First they had to dodge enemy patrols and then recon the target. There had been little to eat and nothing to protect them from the chilling nightly rainshowers. The next few minutes will spell success or failure for their ambush; life or death for them. They badly want the waiting to be over.

A large diesel engine grumbles to life a kilometer behind them. Mounds of red



**FDN commandos do familiarization-firing of line-throwing gun donated by SOF.**

dirt and lush, green jungle mark the furthest progress of a military road as construction crews push it toward the Coco River and the Nicaraguan-Honduran border. The commando squad had watched quietly from their hide as the work crews passed them just before sunrise.

A deafening explosion sends jungle birds into startled flight as insect noises abruptly halt. From the construction site, the commandos hear screams of pain and then shouts of alarm. The first of two U.S. M15 anti-tank mines has done its work on the bulldozer. Despite the tension, the squad leader smiles and makes a final check on his men. Two of them on the opposite side of the road signal they are ready. Their wait is a short one.

Two East German troop trucks, both open on the back and mounting machine guns, come barreling up the muddy clay road. As they draw abreast of the hidden commandos, the second anti-tank mine is command detonated. The lead vehicle erupts into flame, smoke, flying steel and pitching bodies. It veers toward a ditch and rolls on its side in the road, effectively blocking the path of the second truck.

As the second truck backs up and tries to turn around in the narrow space — its machine-gunner wheeling wildly around looking for a target — the commando team opens up with an RPD, AKs and FALs. The machine-gunner and driver are the first to fall. Surviving Sandinista troops vault over the truck's side and — using the vehicle for cover — drop back toward a drainage culvert behind them. As they reach their supposed sanctuary, two hidden troopers of Echo Company, FDN, set off three Claymore mines, unleashing an ear-splitting hailstorm of shrapnel along the length of the ditch.

For two more minutes, the FDN com-



mandos pour automatic fire into the kill zone, then melt quickly into the surrounding jungle, humping toward their border camp.

### AT THE CP

“WE are expecting one of two kinds of attack,” Colonel Enrique Bermudez tells the SOF team during a briefing on our first morning in the FDN border command post. “Sooner there will be artillery attacks, or later on, if that doesn’t happen, we’ll very probably get hit by the Hind helicopters. That is where your people can be very helpful, by providing information on how to defeat this gunship. We also need training in how to set better boobytraps, mines and demolitions.”

The briefing is interrupted by his G-2. Bermudez smiles as he reads the preliminary report, radioed in by an FDN commando unit. A raid against a Sandinista road-construction site the night before has killed about 30 of the enemy, eight when a bulldozer hit a mine and 22 more when the Sandinista cavalry charged into a waiting FDN ambush.

“We are out of Sandinista artillery range right here,” Bermudez explains. “But prisoners and Sandinista deserters have told us they are building a road through the jungle to move up some of the long-range howitzers they get from the Russians. That will put our supply bases in range. Right now (early February) that’s the biggest tactical worry we have. Our Special Forces company has been sending out small operations to delay or stop progress on this road.

“These small-ambush tactics have been particularly effective against the Sandinistas,” he says. “We are trying to compensate for a lack of enough ammunition. But one problem is that while we have been able to get explosives, we have trouble getting them in the large quantities we really need.”

Colonel McColl, an Army reservist whose background includes Special Forces service in Vietnam, offers a suggestion. By all means keep up the small-unit interdiction ops, using what explosives are available. But the FDN might also consider harassment tactics like planting phony mines. Old hubcaps buried in the road will be picked up by mine detectors. All will be treated with the same caution and dread as if they were real, and some hubcaps could have Soviet grenades with zero-delay fuses under them. And FDN snipers could help keep things exciting for the poor Sandinista slobs who have to figure out what’s hot and what’s not.

Dye mentions the possibility of buying commercially available dynamite as a substitute for plastic explosives. I remind them that areas adjacent to both sides of the border have heavy agricultural activity and that ammonium nitrate fertilizer makes a nice, big boom when properly mixed with kerosene.

Our briefing is interrupted again. Every-



Dye uses training aid to teach FDN’s 12.7mm AA gunners.



Colonel Enrique Bermudez, field commander for the Democratic Force of Nicaragua.

one’s attention is riveted on two roosters making low clucking noises as they square off in the road next to the CP. Passing troops pause to watch. Quick bets are made. The nearby click-clacking of headquarters typists stops. A white-faced monkey tied to the steering column inside an abandoned jeep checks his incessant chatter and a coati, Central American cousin to a raccoon, rises up on his haunches to peer out of his cage. Only the generator noise from an adjacent communications truck continues unabated.

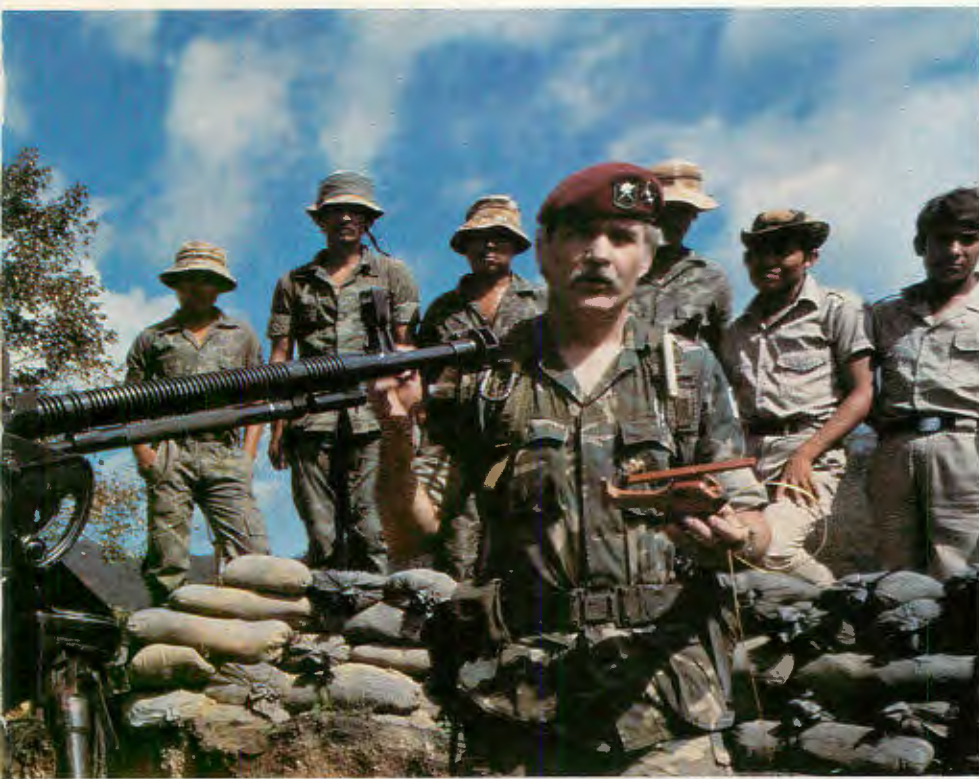
Before the stronger cock can deliver the *coup de grace*, the birds are separated. While the relief from garrison boredom is appreciated, their potential as a continuing food source is too valuable to let them kill each other for mere sport.

Bermudez shows a wry smile as he turns to again face his visitors. “It is very interesting how two cocks cannot be in the same yard together. They remind me of Eden Pastora fighting with his own ego.”

The analogy is not lost on us. Dye immediately seizes the opening to bring up the cooperation — or lack of it — between the FDN, Nicaragua’s largest and strongest resistance movement, and the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE), founded by Pastora. Unfortunately, Pastora’s refusal to cooperate with other resistance movements has hurt the cause the former Sandinista assistant defense minister so loudly claims to support. The unnecessary loss of significant strategic gains in southern Nicaragua — most without shots being fired — and the near-collapse of ARDE are widely blamed on Pastora’s tactical incompetence. His most dedicated troops split to organize Reformed ARDE under El Negro Chamorro.

“José Robelo extends his best wishes





from southern Nicaragua," says Dye, passing on the salutations of one Reformed ARDE leader. Trying to foster at least some logistical cooperation between the two resistance factions, he informs Bermudez that Robelo's troops have an abundance of 60mm mortar ammo, but no tubes with which to shoot it. The easily portable, indirect-fire weapons are essential to successfully wage a hit-hard-and-run-fast unconventional war. "I know the FDN needs some LAWs, which is a surplus item in Reformed ARDE's arsenal. What about a trade, 60mm tubes for some LAWs?"

Bermudez says he has no mortar tubes to spare. "We do want to have a closer relationship with that ARDE group, though," he adds.

During SOF's training mission in southern Nicaragua, we had seen other signs of cooperation. Several FDN troopers had been transferred to the faltering southern front. Because they are on the whole better-trained and more experienced than their Reformed ARDE counterparts, most became squad and platoon leaders. At least one former FDN fighter has become an ARDE field commander.

Bermudez calls an aide to summon the CO of Echo Company, the FDN's Special Forces unit. As he issues instructions, we watch scores of passing troopers fall into formation in front of three large garrison tents for an issue of new equipment. Grenades, boots, ammo, rifles, canteens and ponchos are handed out to men and a few women. Crate markings indicate the equipment is from Argentina, Israel and Canada. These freedom fighters are long on morale and motivation but short on resources. As usual, some troops still are waiting in line



**While this FDN soldier is lucky enough to get new boots, he will have to wear them without socks. Blister City, here I come.**

when the stores are depleted.

Before the cutoff of U.S. government assistance, the Central Intelligence Agency handled all of the FDN's resupply logistics. Since that cutoff the FDN has lost most of its air assets, forcing reliance on overland convoys through Honduran territory. That's slow and available space is severely limited. It's also a source of diplomatic pressure on Honduras from the communist regime in Nicaragua. It's becoming harder and harder for the Hondurans to look the other way.

When the Agency support ended, FDN tacticians had to learn logistics. They've done well enough on their own to keep the majority of the troops supplied for low-intensity operations. If the various factions can put their agreement for a coordinated command structure to work, the FDN would be the logical choice to handle logistics for the resistance.

Other leftover CIA problems are not overcome as easily. For instance, the FDN is the proud owner of two Soviet 120mm mortars which markings indicate were captured in Lebanon from the Palestine Liberation Organization. Unfortunately, The Company delivered these long-range, indirect-fire mortars without sights, trainers or a means to haul the towed weapons. What ammo was provided has mostly been expended on a sort of "flying one out there and see if we happen to hit something" gunnery drill. These weapons — even if they had sights — are not what guerrilla fighters require. Size and transport problems give them questionable value in the type of rough-terrain, mobile war the FDN must wage. And Kentucky windage and long-range artillery do *not* need to be included in the same sentence.

The CIA also delivered various types of weapons and equipment unfamiliar to the FDN and other resistance movements. While the supplies were badly needed, no instruction in their proper deployment and use was provided. One example is the M-15 anti-tank mine. The FDN, understandably afraid of the mines until private sector trainers taught commandos how to arm and deploy them, had stockpiled the weapons.

In his sessions with Bermudez and other FDN leaders, Dye emphasizes the need to fight unconventionally. When Bermudez expresses his need for helicopters, Dye acknowledges this requirement but reminds him that this never stopped the Vietnamese from transporting millions of tons of supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Perhaps it would be a good idea to make porters out of the men stuck in garrison because they lack weapons and ammo to actually fight.

Bermudez introduces us to Commandante Gustavo, CO of the FDN's Echo Company, officially designated *Comando de Operaciones Especiales*. Gustavo, a good-humored, thoughtful man, was a medical student before the revolution. He escorts us to his bivouac, proudly explain-





**Echo Company gunners duck as 81mm mortar lobs a round downrange.**

ing as we lug our gear up the steep hill what his men had done the previous night in ambushing the Sandinista road-building crew.

As Gustavo musters his men under the chow shelter, Dye unpacks the gear we brought to donate to the Special Forces company. This includes a Heckler & Koch flare launcher with long-range magnesium flares and a line-throwing gun manufactured by the Naval Company Inc. of Doylestown, Pa. While I pass out *Soldier of Fortune* reprints of the CIA guerrilla warfare manual, Dye circulates Spanish translations of the brochure he wrote on the Hind helicopter. It had been specially prepared for this mission by Art Director Craig Nunn.

Without being too specific, the brochure identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the Hind, as well as outlining its possible weapons configurations and providing pertinent technical data. The manual also contains well-defined ideas for using Hind weaknesses to destroy the aircraft.

The D-model provided to the Nicaraguans almost always mounts four pods, each containing up to 32 57mm rockets. It can also carry four laser-guided anti-tank missiles with ranges of up to 6.5 miles. Under the nose is a four-barreled 12.7mm machine gun. The Hind's high speed and the heavy, bathtub-shaped armor underneath make it almost impregnable to ground fire.

The Hind's three main weaknesses are its weak rotor head, its tendency to wallow in translational flight (moving from hover to forward flight or vice versa) and a hydraulic system that leaks flammable fluid profusely.

Freedom fighters in Afghanistan shoot down Hinds by positioning 12.7mm



**No one is too old or too young to join in the FDN's fight to reclaim Nicaragua from the communists, as illustrated by these troops waiting to draw supplies and equipment.**

machine guns on mountain crests and firing down on the rotor heads as the helicopter cruises through valleys. There is very little armor anywhere on the top side of a Hind. Steel or Kevlar cable fired into the rotors as this bird moves into or out of an LZ can also bring an abrupt end to flight. That's what prompted employment of the line-throwing device.

Although the gunner and pilot ride in a pressurized cabin, the crew chief often opens the top half of the side hatch to provide increased ventilation and visibility. That's a likely tactic in Nicaragua's muggy climate. A magnesium flare fired through this hatch may ignite leaking hydraulic fluid. An onboard fire means the pilot must set down immediately.

We spend all afternoon letting each trooper learn to load and fire the special weapons. Dye winds up by going over the Hind data once again and how it can be used against the *piricuacos*.



**Various patches worn by troops in the Democratic Force of Nicaragua. The two FDN patches are fairly standard and worn regularly when they are available. The "Nicaragua" patch and the flag pin below are seen in both the FDN and Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE) ranks. The upper left and two bottom patches designate specific units within the FDN. The two bottom symbols are worn by the FDN's revered *Comando de Operaciones Especiales* designated as Echo Company. The bottom version, homemade with denim and hand-painted, is more common, while the official issue, bottom right, is extremely rare. Photo: Dale Andrade.**



## LET THE DONOR BEWARE

By a Staff Member of  
Refugee Relief  
International, Inc.

Many *Soldier of Fortune* readers contribute generously to Refugee Relief International, Inc. The need is great and our appreciation greater still. Most SOF readers know us as a volunteer group of medical professionals who go into Third World hot spots to deliver health care and instruction to those wounded or displaced by communist insurgency. While RRII is not the only such organization active in Central America — other worthy ones exist — it pays the potential contributor to do some checking if he or she is not thoroughly familiar with a particular group.

One thing you *can* count on with RRII: Refugee Relief does *not* provide aid and comfort to the communist enemy. Other organizations can't make the same claim.

Some tax-free foundations are set up specifically to run aid to the Marxists, and don't hesitate to misrepresent themselves or lie outright to garner what support they can to spread the terrorist revolution.

Here is a case in point.

A friend and professional colleague of an RRII staff member — although it's not his real name, we'll call him Dr. Stanley — knows of RRII's work in Central America and is sympathetic to the effort. Because Dr. Stanley was moving his medical practice to a clinic that has newer equipment, he decided to donate his old but serviceable X-ray machine to help hard-pressed Freedom Fighters struggling to oust Nicaragua's military-dominated communist junta.

Although he mentioned the donation to his friend at Refugee Relief, the friend was out of town when it came time to make the transaction. Wanting to donate his machine before the tax year ended, Dr. Stanley decided to pick an alternate group. The good doctor contacted a well-publicized West Coast organization, the Central America Medical Relief Fund.

The CAMRF is part of the Committee for Health Rights in Central America (CHRICA,) a project operated under the auspices of the Capp Street Foundation in San Francisco. Although he had been given the impression that his donation would be sent to help those fighting *against* Managua's communist regime, Dr. Stanley later received a letter from CHRICA thanking him for the X-ray machine, which the group said "... will be of great use to the health-care



**Dr. John Peters, a board member and medical adviser to Refugee Relief International, Inc.**

personnel who receive it in Nicaragua."

According to the Capp Street Foundation, all supplies and equipment received by the CAMRF are distributed by "... an ecumenical church organization in Managua, Nicaragua ... the official affiliate of the National Council of Churches in Nicaragua." That likely means the valuable equipment will wind up being used by some Sandinista surgeon.

Because RRII staff members see firsthand the atrocities committed against innocent civilians by communist insurgents, they have rather strong feelings about giving *any* aid to the Nicaraguan or any other communist government. Of course staff members have treated wounded enemy soldiers. Once a poor bastard is shot, he becomes in our eyes a patient. He is no longer a soldier, but a human being who needs help.

One can not say as much for the communists. The most recent example is the shooting of Maj. Arthur D. Nicholson Jr., who was photographing a military installation in East Germany from an unrestricted zone when he was shot by a Soviet sentry. The guard denied the wounded major any medical treatment for almost an hour. By then Nicholson had bled to death.

But trying to take a more magnanimous view, Dr. Stanley reasoned that although his donated X-ray machine went to the wrong side in Nicaragua's civil war, maybe it would still help relieve some human suffering?

Think again, Doc.

About a week after he made the donation, Dr. Stanley was phoned by a friend who buys, reconditions and resells X-ray equipment. The businessman told Stanley he had been contacted by a group wanting to sell a used X-ray unit and accessories. The market value was set at \$12,000. But they were anxious to sell for some fast cash, so they offered "a real good deal" at \$8,000.

Guess who was selling this X-ray equipment and where they got it? The

X-ray equipment dealer knew the unit well. He had previously sold the same machine to Dr. Stanley. And now instead of sending it to Central America, as they specifically led Dr. Stanley to believe, CHRICA was trying to sell the donated X-ray unit in the United States.

A call to CHRICA by SOF resulted in a recorded message offering tickets at \$10 each to see a performance of the San Francisco Mime Troup. The recording did not specify who or what would benefit from the ticket sales. The message went on to offer copies of a report, "Help in the War Against Nicaragua," which would lead one to believe "against the Sandinistas." But the message — which was spied off so quickly as to be barely understandable — went on to say that the "campaign to free medical teams kidnapped by the contras continues." Contra is a generic Marxist term meaning "counterrevolutionary" and is used by the uninformed to label those who oppose the communist tyranny of the Sandinista regime.

But while CHRICA's recorded message answers the obvious, it gives rise to some more disturbing questions.

First, why did the Committee for Health Rights in Central America tell Dr. Stanley specifically that they were sending his donated machine to Central America and then try to sell it in California?

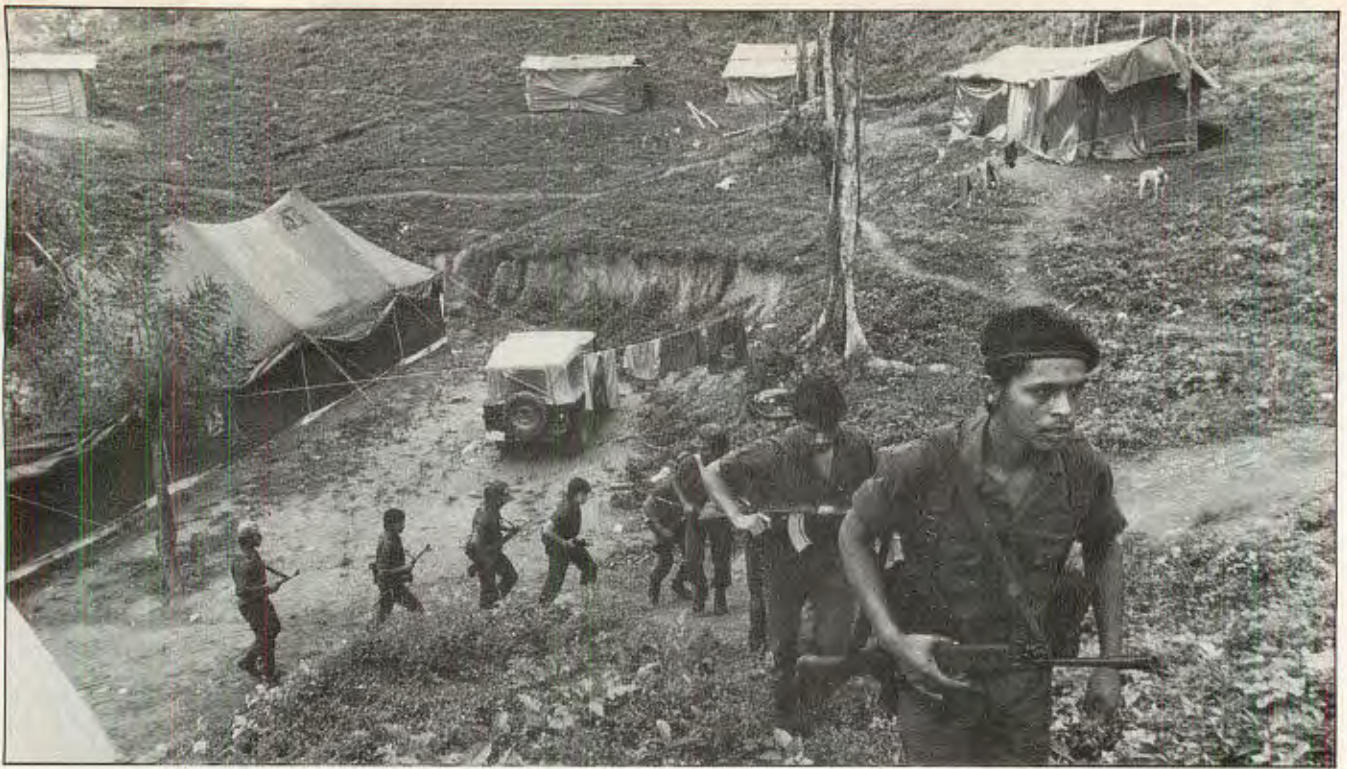
Second, to what purpose is the money used once the donated equipment is sold? Does it pay salaries or administrative expenses for a bunch of U.S. liberals who deliberately misrepresent themselves? Do such funds go directly to the Sandinista government, which spends over half of Nicaragua's annual national income on its war machine, or perhaps to Marxist guerrillas trying to overthrow a duly-elected government in El Salvador?

We wish we could give you some answers. But Arthur Simon, the executive director of the Capp Street Foundation, which financially sponsors CHRICA, failed to return any of SOF's phone calls asking for comment on Dr. Stanley's complaint.

Once Dr. Stanley learned the truth about the matter, he obviously was not happy. But CHRICA did not return the donation. The medical equipment dealer declined to purchase it, so presumably the Committee for Health Rights in Central America is trying to sell it elsewhere.

Obviously some groups will tell the would-be benefactor *anything* to increase the take. So for those feeling altruistic and wanting to help the real fighters for freedom in Central America, let the donor beware.





**Armed with FN FALs, AKs and one Uzi, a long-range reconnaissance patrol of the FDN's Special Forces company returns to camp.**

Dye breaks out his tinker-toy training aid the next morning to help instruct 12.7mm machine-gun crews in anti-aircraft gunnery. He's perversely proud of a wooden helicopter model he has doctored with tape to show the armor configuration on a Hind. We move over to anti-aircraft positions on an adjacent hill. Dye blanches over the position of these weapons — DShK-38s in sandbagged pits — and explains that they need to be redeployed from the topographic crest to the military crest of the hill and camouflaged. As the FDN has them deployed they make excellent targets for an air attack.

Field-expedient anti-aircraft sights are explained to the troops. We shape some with coat hangers and mount them on the guns. Using Dye's small helicopter, one trooper "flies" around the pit while others take turns learning to use the new sights that enable a gunner to properly lead his airborne target. It's not long before Echo Company has the hang of keeping the aircraft in the make-shift ring of the air sights.

Dye's class on the 81mm mortar is more abbreviated than AA training, but not by his choice. We fire illum rounds to conserve HE ammo and to avoid any possibility of firing into friendly patrols. A cease-fire is ordered when the FDN's G-2 notifies us that Sandinista patrols are in the area and there is a possibility they might use the flares to pinpoint our position. We use what little time is left showing the commandos how to dismantle Com-Bloc grenades and identify their fuse delay. We find a few zero-delay fuses and demonstrate various ways they can be used as booby traps.

Commandante Gustavo then proudly shows us mines his men have recovered

### ROCKETS HIT FDN CAMP

As this SOF issue went to press, Sandinista troops hit the main FDN base compound in the Nicaragua-Honduras border area with Soviet-made 122mm rockets, killing one freedom fighter and wounding 10.

Eyewitnesses said the attack began with an assault on an FDN forward camp. After taking the hill on which it was located, the communists fired six to seven volleys of 10 or 12 rounds each. The rockets were the shorter of the two Soviet 122mm versions, weighing about 100 pounds, 1.9 meters long, with a range of about 11km. Both versions have 43-pound TNT warheads. Impacts were scattered and damage limited as about 30 more rockets were fired through the night.

The attack came as Congress prepared to vote on whether to give Nicaragua's freedom fighters another \$14 million, a paltry sum by U.S. foreign aid standards. President Reagan's request was endorsed by several Central American and European nations. But aid was denied.

with the help of a Sandinista deserter. The anti-personnel devices, which had been planted to kill freedom fighters, will now be turned on the communists. Cyrillic markings indicate the plastic explosive and detonators were made in Russia, while the wooden containers were of Cuban origin.

We present eager Echo Company members with SOF patches. As a token of his gratitude, Gustavo gives Dye a propaganda biography of Augusto César Sandino, dead guerrilla and figurehead of the communist revolution in Nicaragua. Gustavo, who inscribes it to Dye, had taken it off the body of a *piricuaco* which he had dispatched to the realm of all good communists.

Just prior to evening chow on our last night in camp, Col. Bermudez provides us with a jeep and driver to take us to the FDN recruit training camp. During our stay we have been struck by the large numbers of people pouring into the camp wanting to join up. Many are already living in plastic-covered hootches, and men with wives and infants in tow are not uncommon. My most personally disconcerting experience is trying to fall asleep at night while listening to the sound of heavy machine-gun fire mixed with the cries of babies.

The boot camp is rough but neat. Many of the recruits are painfully young, some training with sticks because no real weapons are available. Most are ragged and barefoot. Those lucky enough to have boots usually don't have socks. We informally survey the trainees about their reasons for joining the FDN. Most say they fled Sandinista oppression or Nicaragua's comprehensive draft. They would rather die fighting *against* the communists than *with* them.



Typical of their sentiments — but much more well-articulated — is the story told by one veteran boot-camp trainer whose *nom de guerre* is Ramiro. He was a college student studying business in Managua before the communists crushed his hopes and dreams.

"Life under Somoza was bad," Ramiro says matter-of-factly. "But the Sandinistas make Somoza look like a saint. Somoza was greedy and never took care of the people, so the social reforms offered by the Sandinistas looked very attractive. Many people naturally hoped and believed the Sandinistas were genuinely interested in helping the poor better their lot. And they have taught many to read and write who had no hope of that before. But they use the reading and writing program mainly to brainwash citizens with communist propaganda. Human rights were violated under Somoza. But these violations remained in the realm of the outrageous. Under the *piricuacos* the regular violation of human rights has become an accepted means of controlling the population through terrorism, implicit and explicit. Political pressure is applied by the Sandinistas on the population as a whole while a few people are singled out and killed as an example to others."

That's hardly the party line you'd expect of a Somoza loyalist. It is indicative of the plight of 16,000 FDN freedom fighters and other Nicaraguan anti-communists.

Back at the CP we ask Bermudez how he responds to charges by U.S. liberals that his is an illegitimate cause of right-wing extremists who kill innocent civilians in Nicaragua. Checking a list of his 53 regional commanders, he indicates only 12 had served in Somoza's National Guard. His estimate is that only one percent of his total troop strength have similar experience.

"The Sandinistas are very good liars," Bermudez says concerning the charges of brutality. "They take militia members with minimal training and other civilians with no training, put them in uniforms, give them weapons and send them out in military trucks to collect crops. When we attack, they say we kill innocent civilians. That happened last year when some women were killed.

"If the FDN is defeated, it will be a big victory for the Sandinistas and communists everywhere," he says. "A defeat of the FDN will be a defeat for all other resistance groups in Nicaragua because we are putting the most pressure on the Sandinistas. We have been fighting for eight months now without U.S. support. Our morale is high, though our resources are low. But we will find a way. We have nothing left to lose and everything to gain. And people just like us from all over Nicaragua are joining the cause. But to win we need material and financial support. We deserve it. Because we are fighting for democracy, not just for ourselves, but for freedom-loving people everywhere. The



**An FDN boot-camp bulletin board is illustrated with photos cut out of the previous month's *Soldier of Fortune*. A pleasantly surprised Capt. Dye takes note.**

Sandinistas are fighting for the interests of the Soviet Union and the imperialist goals of all communists. We must win or die trying. There is no better way.

"You see, no one understood until it was too late that these people in Managua want complete and absolute control of everything around them. That is a foundation of their evil philosophy, much to our sorrow. But most Nicaraguans couldn't see that during the Sandinista insurgency. 'No, that happened in Cuba,' they thought, 'but it won't happen in Nicaragua. We are different.'" Bermudez laughs at the cruel irony of this misguided thinking.

These thoughts circle through my head as we bump back toward the Honduran capital, mixed with the memory of those babies crying in the night and wonder at what the future could hold for them. We pass more *campesinos* on the road headed for the FDN border camps. Many are not yet adolescents. As we slow down to negotiate a treacherous curve outside the last FDN checkpoint, we are "ambushed" by a bunch of camp urchins playing war. It's the only game in their squalid town, the only game they know. A few have rusted AKs with bolts removed. A boy of no more than 5 or 6 crouches in a muddy ditch as we pass, pulling an imaginary lanyard and yelling "Boom!" The tragedy for these dirty, ragged kids is the fuzzy line between childhood and the real world. All too quickly it is no longer a game. ☒

## INSIDE NICARAGUA: A RETROSPECTIVE

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. José Wenceslao Mayorga, now an attorney in California, served for 24 years in Nicaragua's National Guard. But on 28 August 1978, the former lieutenant colonel and other high-ranking colleagues were— in Mayorga's words — "seriously implicated in a military plot to overthrow the Commander-in-Chief of the Guardia Nacional, General Anastasio Somoza Debayle." As Mayorga explains it, the plot was aimed at making "profound changes in the military structures of the Army, with a definitive separation of the Somoza family from the high commands (and) to proceed then to total . . . democratic and pluralist processes."*

*It didn't work. Somoza was tipped off by one of the supposed co-conspirators. Lieutenant Humberto Zuniga, who was in reality a member of Somoza's Office of National Security. Once that happened, Mayorga says, "the opportunity to save Nicaragua from falling into the hands of a subversive movement — the Sandino Front of National Liberation — was lost."*

*The right-wing military dictator was overthrown a few months later by a broad-based political coalition spearheaded by the Sandinistas. Once in power, Mayorga points out, the Sandinistas took only six months to consolidate their political gains by isolating the groups that had help put them in power. Mayorga says he realized the end was near when "the radicalization of the communist system started, separating from the most important government posts all persons with democratic tendencies, assuming for the Sandinista hierarchy total control of the government and thus closing the way to democracy and national conciliation."*

*After helping Eden Pastora, a former high-ranking Sandinista government official, set up his Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE) in southern Nicaragua, Mayorga became disenchanted with Pastora's poor leadership and moved to the United States, where he continues to support the resistance movement. This is his assessment of the situation inside Nicaragua and among the resistance movements.*

Despite recent appearances that they are more willing to negotiate, the Sandinista government actually has been dramatically upping the stakes in Nicaragua's civil war. True to the history of communist insurgent movements, they take whatever measures are necessary to buy more time in which to consolidate their power. The steady flood of Com-

*Continued on page 91*





# HANOI HITS HARD AND HOLDS

## A New Wrinkle Along the Thai-Cambodian Border

by David Mills and Dale Andrade

**I**T'S been six years since the Vietnamese Army pushed the Khmer Rouge out of Cambodia and no one has yet spotted any light at the end of the violent tunnel. That doesn't mean fiercely nationalistic Cambodians aren't trying to kick the Viets out of their land. It simply indicates they are having one hell of a time doing it.

A coalition of three resistance groups has been formed to meet the threat of continuing Vietnamese occupation and it has managed to keep Hanoi from feeling too secure. Unfortunately, it hasn't been enough to keep the military strategists of the Vietnamese high command from planning yet another dry-season offensive to follow the inevitable South-east Asian monsoons. That keeps the rebels from feeling too secure in their border sanctuaries.

When the jungle and brushlands of the area dry out after the long monsoon each year, the Vietnamese invaders strike at guerrilla bases wedged in the rugged mountains on the Thai-Cambodian border. They typically withdraw before the next rains flood out their logistical pipelines. Last year things happened differently.

The Vietnamese attacked earlier — before the monsoons had ended — and hit harder than they had in previous offensives. They made strategic gains in the unexpected move and they appear to have no intention of backing off. Such combat action on the border has been monitored closely by the international press. Reporters tend to swarm the refugee camps with the coming of every dry season but they miss — understandably — the significance of the desperate fighting in volatile sectors of Cambodia's interior.

Word of short, sharp engagements filters back to the border by word of mouth. Guerrilla bands returning from the interior tell of derailed trains and lightning raids on Vietnamese outposts around Cambodia's huge lake, Tonle Sap. How much is fabrication and whether or not such strikes have had any effect on the Vietnamese occupation forces is hard to judge. No journalists have been allowed into the interior with the rebels.

It is clear that some significant action continues against Vietnamese forces garrisoned around Phnom Penh. Khmer Rouge raids on areas outside the city have made life tense for the Viets. Despite such nagging pressure from the rebels, no one is betting the Vietnamese will not stage another dry-season offensive this year. Cambodian resis-

tance leaders fear it will be bigger and more brutal than previous pushes because of the pressure they have exerted on the troops based throughout the interior. This year the Vietnamese will not be satisfied to simply drive the Cambodian rebels out of static positions, torch villages and then pull back. Hanoi wants the painful rebel thorn removed for good. That became evident in the 1984 fighting.

No one knows for sure what was going on in the think tanks of Hanoi's version of the Pentagon, but it's likely military planners had two main objectives for the 1984 offensive in Cambodia. They wanted to crush the military apparatus of the resistance movements and prevent supplies from reaching fighters in the interior. Secondly — and most importantly — Hanoi wanted to force a political collapse within the resistance coalition. The Vietnamese have seen the ranks of the non-communist forces bulge with recruits recently and that's worrisome.

They have not totally succeeded in either regard but coalition forces have suffered some staggering damage. Although they have done little significant harm to the Vietnamese-backed forces in Cambodia, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) was a particular target during the last push. The offensive opened in late November with attacks on KPNLF formations providing clear indication that Hanoi was playing hardball this time.

With an armed strength of about 15,000, the KPNLF was the logical choice to bear the brunt of the Vietnamese charge. Officered by ex-members of the Lon Nol regime, the KPNLF was not up for the rigors of a mobile defense and commanders were hampered by large numbers



of civilians in their camps. They chose a disastrous strategy of static defense against a superior enemy force. Critics charged that some officers of the KPNLF were more interested in tending their rose gardens, watching videos and drinking *Singha* beer than waging war against the Vietnamese invaders. Whatever the reasoning, the KPNLF dug in along the border and prepared for a siege. It wasn't long in coming.

On Christmas Day 1984, a massive artillery bombardment struck the main KPNLF base at

**RIGHT:** Before the fall of their base at Nong Chan, the KPNLF had plenty of time for parades and PR. Now they have had to re-examine their strategy. Photo: William Nojay



Ampil. The barrage was followed by an infantry assault supported by some 35 tanks. Ampil defenders reeled and the Vietnamese quickly overran the camp sending floods of rebels and refugees over the Thai border. The KPNLF expected the Viets would pull back and gloat but the troops didn't leave Ampil. They dug in and formed a perimeter along the border just inside Cambodian territory.

From the looks of things in the area now, the Vietnamese are planning to stay. Rumors of an Asian version of the Berlin Wall have been circulating. The Viets have reportedly built a barrier along the

**ABOVE:** KPNLF Special Forces commander, Colonel Pann Thay, is rethinking his military tactics in the face of the new Vietnamese offensive. Photo: David Mills





border to keep the KPNLF from returning. They supposedly employed forced labor including Thais kidnapped from the border areas in Trat Province. It's not likely that they can successfully seal a border stretching more than 700 miles, but they may be able to force the guerrillas to move through choke points where the Viets can exercise some control over supplies and equipment reaching the interior.

On the dirty end of the stick is the KPNLF soldier. He has become somewhat disillusioned by the lack of activity and badly needs motivation. He needs evidence of a new resistance strategy. His morale is low and KPNLF commanders are faced with significant problems in lifting it.

It's a new wrinkle. Morale was never difficult to maintain when the KPNLF pushed Vietnamese dry-season offensives back with relative ease. Following the defeat of 1984 and the subsequent inactivity, guerrilla morale has become the KPNLF's primary concern. Unfortunately, they've got other problems.

The loss of Ampil and seven smaller bases effectively finished the KPNLF as a fighting force for at least the rest of 1985. They may never recover to their former strength. After the dust of battle settled, it became apparent that the strategy of defending border strongholds and housing massive refugee populations was ineffective. The KPNLF leadership seems to have shifted back to a more classic guerrilla warfare strategy but they've had little chance to show the troops that it will work. If they intend to improve troop morale and become a gadfly for the Viets to consider seriously, the KPNLF will have to bring the war to

the communist government inside Cambodia.

Fortunately for the KPNLF, the military strategy lesson has been relatively cheap. Their leader, Son Sann, claims that casualties in the retreat from Ampil amounted to only six killed and 83 wounded. According to his figures, total casualties from fighting in all KPNLF areas during 1984 totaled a relatively paltry 103 killed and 464 wounded. It's a tiny bright spot but the Vietnamese continue to breathe down their necks and the KPNLF must do something tangible to get back in the fight.

In hard military terms that means moving the KPNLF's 15,000 or so fighters away from vulnerable positions along the border and into the interior. While such a move will leave the refugee camps virtually undefended, the KPNLF has little to worry about in that regard. The Vietnamese would gain nothing but bad press

**RIGHT: The KPNLF has attracted a lot of attention as a viable non-communist alternative to both the Vietnamese-controlled government and the Khmer Rouge. After the latest dry-season offensive, though, their future may be in doubt. Photo: William Nojay**



around the world by attacking defenseless civilians. It's defecate or vacate the receptacle at this point. In the words of one ranking spokesman, the "KPNLF armed forces must be away from the border. Period."

That's going to be a tough task for the guerrillas. I discovered why during some depressing

**ABOVE: An RPG-armed Khmer resistance fighter gazes out over the territory that separates the Vietnamese Army from the Thai border. Photo: David Mills**







days earlier this year when I visited the squalid refugee camps that scar the border area like urban slums. Rationed water and little food are about all the refugees can expect. Still they swarm to the refuge. They spend most of a typical day standing in long, silent lines for water and food giving up their precious place only when the Vietnamese lob artillery in their midst. Naturally, it's a little hard to find happy faces.

Hard-core KPNLF units stage patrols from the camps but not everyone who wears the guerrilla mantle is anxious to get into the fight. I noticed many unarmed guerrillas hanging around the camps. While both the Thais and the KPNLF dismiss any reports of large-scale desertions, other sources claim more than 1,000 KPNLF fighters have decided to lay down their arms and become refugees. That supports the contention of low morale and marks an important consideration concerning the displaced Cambodians.

Family ties are the most important aspect of Khmer life. Many guerrillas were happy to be involved in a nine-to-five war which allowed them to return to their families in the base camps at night. That sort of service is no longer possible and the prospect of being separated from wives and children for an indefinite period while chasing Viet troops through the bush is intimidating. It remains to be seen if KPNLF leaders can defeat such culturally influenced attitudes. If they can get the soldiers away from their families and out into the bush where they can fight like true guerrillas, some tangible military gains may follow. A solid victory would surely add cement to the KPNLF ranks and improve morale. The situation is decidedly

different among the remaining two factions of the coalition.

The small Sihanoukist group and the communist Khmer Rouge have beat similar problems. Deliberately discouraging family ties in favor of communist doctrine among the 30,000 troops under its influence, the KR leadership does not have to worry about fighting men scurrying back over the Thai border to join their dependents. The KPNLF lacks the political fervor to copy the tactic, but they have seen the light.

The question along the border these days is whether or not they can keep it lit and continue to put pressure on the Vietnamese invaders.

Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge (KR) has had to deal with more practical problems following the shock of the 1984 Vietnamese offensive. After a brief lull, the Viets regrouped and continued attacks on the KR base area of Phnom Malai. It was a predictable move. The Khmer Rouge has carried on the same brand of insurgency that has characterized their fighting since they defeated the Lon Nol government in the 1970s. It's dirty, deadly guerrilla warfare in the classic sense.

Although the Vietnamese ousted the Khmer Rouge in 1979, they never destroyed their political or military base. Today, the KR has 30-50,000 troops under arms and they are considered a highly disciplined, well-trained force. The KR attacks military and economic targets and then melts away into the Cambodian hinterlands. Active in all the provinces of Cambodia, the KR has to be recognized as the real military threat to Hanoi despite their reputation as the murderers of millions of their own people between 1975 and 1978.

Even the Vietnamese



admit that they are up against a professional fighting force in the KR. In January of 1984, the KR stepped up its guerilla campaign all over Cambodia hoping to disrupt the People's Republic of Kampuchea's (PRK) celebration of the fifth anniversary of their ascent to power. It marked the culmination of their own 1983-84 dry-season military strategy. KR leaders particularly wanted to increase pressure on the Phnom Penh government and seize strategic areas such as the coastal province of Koh Kong in western Cambodia.

**RIGHT:** The strongest group in the resistance, the communist Khmer Rouge, probably has the best chance of beating back the Vietnamese. This KR trooper holds his M79 grenade launcher during the peaceful days before the Vietnamese offensive. Photo: David Mills



**ABOVE:** KPNLF troops patrol the area around the Thai border for signs of Vietnamese activity. Photo: William Nojay



Machine-gun emplacements like this KPNLF redoubt may look good, but they offer little protection against Vietnamese heavy artillery. Photo: William Nojay

A second sweep in the beginning of 1984 concentrated on the areas north, west and east of the Tonle Sap. This time the KR managed to hold their own and the communists launched a final sweep on 25 March 1984. It was directed at border provinces from Koh Kong in the south to Prey Vihear in the north. It made news in the West because the fighting spilled over into Thai territory on several occasions. Thai troops guarding the border were quickly reinforced.

After jabbing at the KR and delivering a less-than-staggering blow, the Vietnamese dug in and concentrated on a propaganda campaign designed to attract coalition deserters. The KR watched the action in KPNLF areas with some trepidation. It was obvious to them that after the Vietnamese had finished dismembering the KPNLF at Ampil, they would turn their full fury on Phnom Malai. That's precisely what happened. The KR was better prepared to handle the onslaught than the KPNLF but they had a problem.

Hanoi opened its advance on the KR on 27 January from the south with the 59th Division backed by one regiment from the 5th Division and one from the 9th. Although the terrain was rugged, the Vietnamese threw some Soviet-built T-54 tanks at Phnom Malai. With most of the KR forces massed against the northern border of the camp near the settlements of Phum Thmei, the move appeared to catch the communist fighters off guard.

From their position on the Thai border, the KR had previously decided to meet the Vietnamese threat in an entirely different manner than any of the other resistance groups. They considered the border to be of only secondary importance. More important in their calculations was the broad operational belt around the Tonle Sap — an area they had given primary importance to since 1980. To the KR, success in combat is a matter of how many soldiers are fighting deep inside their occupied homeland rather than how many are holed up in some border enclave.

The Vietnamese were well aware of KR tactics and their attack on Phnom Malai was partly



designed to pull KR guerrillas from the interior back to stand and defend the Phnom Malai base complex. The ruse didn't draw many KR guerrillas from deep inside Cambodia, but a few were pulled into the fight. A party of KR fighters turned up in the

Phnom Malai area to help defend the base. Asked why they looked so exhausted, they replied that they had just returned from the Battambang area where other bitter engagements were taking place.

After days of bitter fighting and heavy shell-

ing, the bases at Phnom Malai fell, forcing some 40,000 Khmer Rouge civilians into Thailand and boosting the refugee population to around 250,000. On the diplomatic front the ASEAN countries urged increased military aid to the coalition. The call for

help was aimed mostly at the U.S. which has supplied humanitarian aid but so far has resisted sending the coalition military supplies.

The non-communist countries aren't the only ones throwing their weight into the fray. China has also been playing

## FROM THE ASHES OF DEFEAT

Sometimes it's hard to know who's running the show along the Cambodian border. Few names have emerged from the confusing coalition of anti-Vietnamese forces to become household words in the West. Most obscure are the military leaders of the anti-communist KPNLF.

Most KPNLF officers are former Khmer Republic soldiers who fought for the ill-fated Lon Nol regime before it fell in 1975. They include men like General Sak Sutsakhan who served as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Chief of the General Staff and as the last Chief of State of the Khmer Republic. Like most high-ranking members of the Royal Khmer Army, he trained at the French Military Academy and at various war colleges in the U.S. He's back on top of a military heap these days but facing far-different command problems. Sak Sutsakhan is currently the Military Commander and Vice President of the KPNLF.

His office was in a rustic command post wedged into the contested turf along the Thai-Cambodian border. Now he's virtually baseless but not hopeless. When the Vietnamese overran the KPNLF strongholds in late 1984, Sak Sutsakhan was forced to move to Bangkok and try to reorganize his shattered command. He figures the trouncing his troops took may be the mold which shapes their future.

Sak Sutsakhan has always been an outspoken advocate of a traditional guerrilla struggle. After years of fighting the Khmer Rouge, he knows the value of such tactics. And he's trying to convince his fighters to adopt them.

As United Nations Border Relief Officials prepared to evacuate 62,000 Khmer civilians from Khao-I-Din (Red Hill) to a safer camp, Sak Sutsakhan made a surprise visit. Speaking to his people through a bullhorn, he told them not give up the struggle and offered hope for a bright future. I managed to put a few questions to him.

SOF: *What does the future hold for the KPNLF?*

SS: They will continue the struggle—but fighting as true guerrillas. Mistakes have been made in the past and they now need time to retrain before carrying the fight into Cambodia.

SOF: *What place do you see for the Khmer Rouge in the future?*

SS: The Khmer Rouge is the most powerful group in the coalition. It is now not so hard-line communist and the West must realize that this is a struggle by the Cambodian people against the Vietnamese.

SOF: *Approximately how many Vietnamese are in Cambodia?*

SS: There are over 800,000 Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia. Add to these the 180,000 Cambodian troops and you have a Vietnamese-Cambodian ratio of 4:1. In 10 years' time the Khmers will have almost ceased to exist as a people.

SOF: *What is the supply situation like for the coalition?*



**General Sak Sutsakhan, a key KPNLF military leader, has long been an advocate of a true guerrilla strategy for the Khmer resistance. Photo: David Mills**

SS: We are well-supplied with arms and ammunition although we have no heavy weaponry to counter the heavy arty and tanks of the Vietnamese. Only 82mm and 85mm against 105mm, 122mm and 130mm weapons. Singapore sends some arms to the KPNLF but China is the main support for all the groups.

SOF: *What form of support does the West give to the KPNLF?*

SS: The main support has so far been in the form of aid to the refugees.

SOF: *In what areas do the KPNLF need help?*

SS: Training. Most the the Khmers are willing to fight, just as our civilians wish to return to their country.

As foreign press crews descended on the general, it became harder to be heard above the din of hurled questions. Sak Sutsakhan soon tired of it too. He rolled off in his car toward the next camp.

Aid has become the central theme of the KPNLF's bid to stay in the insurgency game. The Chinese have kept the Khmer Rouge generously equipped but the KPNLF has had to be content with leftover gear. U.S. and ASEAN pressure on Peking is the only reason that the KPNLF gets any Chinese aid at all. But that doesn't mean that Washington is ready to arm the rebels. The State Department has consistently refused to back any of the groups.

All is not lost, though. The KPNLF have their own aid scheme. Any private citizen who wants to give more than just moral support to help KPNLF rebels can send money. It doesn't take much. Forty dollars will buy two uniforms, one pair of shoes, two pairs of socks, knapsack, plastic sheet and a scarf for one soldier. That's not a bad deal.

The address is KPNLF, P.O. Box 22-25, Ramintra Post Office, Bangkok 10220 Thailand. —David Mills



a role in the coalition game. Peking has supplied the KR since the Vietnamese invasion in 1978 and has threatened to teach the Vietnamese a "second lesson" if they continue their attacks on the border outposts. That threat is likely to remain empty because Peking will go to great lengths to maintain the status quo in their relations with the Soviets — the main supplier of arms and financial aid to the Vietnamese. The visit of Soviet First Deputy Premier Ivan Arkhipov to China had plenty to do with the uncharacteristic calm in Peking over the situation in Cambodia.

Sihanouk's band of 3,000 fighters may have hoped to escape notice



in this latest offensive but they were also pressured by the Viets. In March 1985, the Vietnamese turned their muscle on the Sihanouk loyalists based at Green Hill. Under a heavy midnight shelling, they pushed the last of the rebels over the Thai border. That's where they remain and there is little potential for them to get effectively back into the fight this year. They are facing the same problem with moving through the Vietnamese formation on the border as the KPNLF.

It is still too early to predict the final outcome of this latest offensive, but it is obvious the consequences will be more far-reaching than they have following previous actions. The ASEAN countries will continue to

## BORDER OUTING

Minus the infamous "Five O'clock Follies" staged by American information officers for journalists covering the war, the routine for reporters watching the situation in Cambodia is strikingly similar to what it was in Vietnam. Journalists lounge around hotel lobbies while the urban hustle and bustle swirls around them. The war in Cambodia — like the previous one on Vietnamese battlefields — seems remote from the situation in Bangkok. For the media, it's a weekend war.

They emerge from hotels in Bangkok and flock to the refugee camps perched precariously on the Thai-Cambodian border to file regular situation reports. These forays require them to be out of bed at 0430, grab a cup of coffee and watch the first flush of dawn paint the Chao Phrya river and the rice barges and ferries that dot its placid surface.

For the majority of the 200 or so journalists covering the fighting during a Vietnamese dry-season offensive, the ritual has become monotonous. Hired cars and hotel limos nose onto the highways leading out of Bangkok and crawl south to the border area. It's become so routine that the traditionally mortal struggle between journalists for scoops is set aside until everyone has a ride to the playground. No fair sneaking out of the city to work on your own.

Even if a reporter tried to get a leg up on the competition, the Thais would prevent it. There is no longer unrestricted access of the type that was available during the early days of the offensive. Now the rigorously controlled border is opened by the Thais at 0800. Reporters are herded in and out of the area with the rising and setting of the sun.

The first control point is some 35 clicks from the border town of Aranyaprathet. Most reporters relax at this point. The Thais often take hours before issuing a pass to proceed. The journalists take the opportunity to swap gossip and tips about where the action is. Once a pass is

issued they can move to the Task Force 80 area where they discover which parts of the border are open to visitors. Those are usually *not* where the action is.

Checkpoints dot all the main road junctions and none of them have the slightest idea what the others are doing. It's a frustrating experience for a reporter cleared at one checkpoint for a visit to Nong Prue to discover at a second stop that the Thais have changed their minds. The only solution is to find a cooperative border patrol officer. In Thai the word for "responsibility" can also mean "a bad thing." It figures. No one wants to be the one to give the OK. Usually, the man who can do so has "just left for the next camp."

When and if you do reach the resistance camps, Thai officials in the area will frequently frustrate your attempts to nail down information. One Saturday I visited one of the main evacuation centers at Sanror Changan where 32,000 KPNLF civilians from Ampil had taken refuge from the fighting on the other side of the border. As a party of journalists arrived, the Vietnamese lobbed a few 130mm shells into the area just to keep everyone alert.

It's a common occurrence and the refugees should be used to it. But every time a shell drops into the area, they gather up their belongings and prepare to flee. The Thai Rangers and UNBRO are generally able to calm them and prevent panic. Camera crews in the camp got footage of the shelling but arriving journalists were turned away and told that there had been *no shelling*. Don't bother to believe your eyes or seek confirming sources.

A couple of slow weeks later we headed for the Khmer Rouge camp of Nong Prue. After the usual checkpoint hassles we got into the general area. As if to thwart our good luck, our driver got lost and it took us a few more hours to get to the camp via a back road. One of my constant fears in Cambodia was surviving being shelled or shot at only to die at the hands of some Kamikaze taxi driver. I discovered later that the taxis were the least of the dangers for journalists.



push for more military aid to the non-communist factions, but the loss of the border bases has done considerable damage to the coalition's credibility. ASEAN has continued to appeal for more arms from the Western world but to no avail. Washington still refuses to arm any of the factions because they feel that would simply harden attitudes all around and do nothing to resolve the situation.

Militarily, the KPNLF is in the more dire straits. They must rethink and implement an entirely different military strategy. And they must do it in the face of improved Vietnamese lines of communication and control along the border. The Vietnamese have

every intention of holding their ground and cutting supply routes to the interior. Most analysts agree that Vietnam's strategy will push toward domination of the border areas throughout the entire year rather than moving off at the onset of the monsoon. They'll remain in the border area, but that will leave them vulnerable to attacks from guerrilla units — mostly KR — who are operating from the interior.

Talk of a Vietnamese withdrawal that would leave the insurgency problem in the hands of the Heng Samrin government has circulated for the last few years. Although this possibility has been bantered about by diplomats and journalists, veteran observers give it little serious

consideration. Hanoi has never been prone to surrender hard-won gains. A Vietnamese withdrawal would only serve to strengthen resistance claims that they will eventually win the war.

Finally, while the Cambodian military situation ebbs and flows, it stagnates under a political deadlock. KPNLF leaders have lost face in this latest failure and it's unlikely they can rally during 1985.

For the Khmer Rouge 1985 is bound to be business as usual. Attack when in strength, withdraw when outnumbered: the same tactics they have employed in the past. Although they have lost much of their base at Phnom Malai, KR formations have managed to survive and

will be around to fight another day. The KR remain the only viable military force in the coalition and will play a significant part of any future settlement in Cambodia.

While Hanoi has failed to deliver a mortal blow to the Cambodian resistance, it has seized the political initiative by stepping up the tempo on the battlefield. By launching the offensive two months earlier than in previous years, Vietnam seems to have caught everybody off guard. The burden of combat credibility is no longer on Hanoi. It has shifted to the coalition — which now must rebuild its morale — and to ASEAN which must minimize the damage done among prospective allies in the fight to oust the Vietnamese from Cambodia. ✕



**After the successful Vietnamese dry-season offensive, Khmer refugees were forced in record numbers over the Thai border. Photo: David Mills**

At Nong Prue we encountered a curious bunch of refugees who were separated from the rest of the homeless mob. Tagging along behind them was a group of Thai Rangers trying their hardest not to look like armed guards. They were decidedly camera-shy. Some covered their faces while others threw stones at me.

A truck pulled up and started to unload sacks of hamburger buns. I moved in to take some close-ups. The Thai Rangers escort party made it clear that we were off-limits here. We argued while the KR troopers proceeded to divide the bags of buns. The Thais demanded that we leave. Facing the muzzles of their weapons, we did.

The next day we returned to the border and tried to get back into Nong Prue. A Viet attack was inevitable and large refugee populations were being moved to safer locations. The Thais had put out guard posts every few meters along the camp perimeter and we were caught. A burst of gunfire snapped the air and, taking advantage of the confusion, we split up and scurried into the camp. I ran toward a drainage ditch in time to witness two Rangers hauling a KR boy out of the water by his hair. My

camera naturally snapped up to my eye. The Rangers yelled at me and tried to knock my camera away. I wound up focusing on the muzzle of an M16.

"No photos! No photos!" Right.

They made me sit on the ground with my hands on top of my head until they decided what to do. After a few minutes of chattering among themselves, they threw me out of the camp. On the way out I saw a couple of Vietnamese prisoners being brought into the camp for interrogation. Blindfolded and stripped to the waist they would be questioned while the camp population watched. I learned it wasn't unusual for two or three to come across every week. Many undoubtedly were spies but most are southern Vietnamese who say they're tired of fighting Hanoi's war.

When the border closes down with the setting sun, the journalists head back to Aranyaprathet and congregate in the Bamboo Bar. This delightful little hangout prospers because it's in the right place at the right time. The proprietor caters to the needs of the press visiting the border. Reporters can try to milk relief officials for information and soothe their frustrations with cold beer. That usually results in more frustration. The officials can't afford to anger the Thais and they are fairly close-mouthed except for gossip.

It's an incongruous scene at the Bamboo Bar. People laugh and drink while Vietnamese artillery is answered by Thai counter-battery fire. The journalists disregard the noise. It's all for show and little damage is done on the Thai side of the border.

The real barometer for determining how close a big fight may be is much simpler and more accurate. The journalists look for the number of tiny Buddhas charms being worn by the Thai troopers in the area. One generally means things will be quiet. If there are three or four dangling from each neck, the situation is going to be tough.

Shades of the Vietnam War. Some things never change.

— David Mills



# WHEN SHADOWS SHOOT BACK



## High Tension on a Hilltop in El Salvador

Text and photos by Peter G. Kokalis

**I**T was a dicey time, sitting up on that hill stacking ammo belts and straightening grenade pins. The Gs would most likely assemble on the hill adjacent to our 'A' camp and move across the connecting saddle to assault our puny perimeter.

Things looked shaky from where I sat in a slit-trench cut with great effort into the powdery red volcanic soil full of stubborn boulders. Between me and the bad guys was an M60 GPMG. I was the machine-gun guru and had placed the weapon to cover the most likely avenue of approach. There were only 50 good guys on this hill and intel said we might be hit by a guerrilla force of as many as 500-1,000. There was TacAir in the form of A-37 Dragonflys at Ilopango Air Base and an infantry company had been sent to probe the northern base of our position, but it was clear to me that we would bear the brunt of the assault — if it came.

I should have known this would happen. The night I arrived at the *cuartel*, located just eight clicks from the Honduran border in northern El Salvador (security demands the exact location remain secret), the troops holding this piece of high ground popped illumination rounds from their M19 60mm mortar. It was not a red carpet for my arrival. They had spotted lights in the bush. Out here that generally means the Gs are massing for an attack.

Within 48 hours, we discovered the significance of the lights the troops had spotted in the bush. The guerrillas, expecting a battalion rotation, massed about 500 terrorists 28 clicks from this unit's base *cuartel* on the road to San Salvador. They established a secondary ambush point only four clicks from the *cuartel* to intercept the anticipated relief force. Instead of a relief battalion, a convoy of two trucks — each loaded with about 46 soldiers — sailed down the road in the early morning hours. The rear truck was flagged down by villagers just before reaching the secondary ambush point. The villagers indicated to the officer cadet in charge that there were Gs in the area. He off-loaded the truck and flanked the high ground adjacent to the road. Two guerrillas

were killed in the ensuing contact.

Meanwhile, the first truck roared on toward the primary ambush point unaware of the encounter. The trap was sprung too early and the truck was hit by the frontal units of the ambush party with three Soviet RPG-2 HEAT projectiles. The driver — the same soldier who had picked me up at the airport five days earlier — was killed instantly and the truck swerved off the road, slamming into a bedrock outcropping. The 2nd Lt. in charge maneuvered his men away from the vehicle and forced the guerrillas to pull back, but not before he had suffered eight KIA and nine WIA. A-37 Dragonflys screamed in on the withdrawing guerrilla columns and inflicted heavy casualties.

A quick recon of the ambush area revealed that things weren't that well-planned. Apparently short of the F1 grenades they receive from Mother Russia, the guerrillas had employed crude pipe bombs in the ambush and I examined several specimens the next day. They were bound to take another crack at us and this remote 'A' camp seemed a likely target.

Our hill, which stands 300 feet above the surrounding countryside, was the site of a CIA communications center. I shared the camp commander's hootch, a rather spacious one-room building of wood and masonite. The officers' latrine was a concrete one-holer surrounded by walls of tarp and ammo crates. A shower stall was also covered by tarps and supplied with ice-cold water from a 55-gallon drum set on top. I supplemented this with a five-gallon portable solar water heater magnanimously supplied by SOF Publisher Bob Brown. But creature comforts were the furthest thing from my mind when the alert was sounded. Fortunately, we could count on the Gs opting for a night attack.

Earlier in the day, Captain José Melara, the camp commander, had ordered up a .50-caliber MG from the *cuartel's* fire-support team. If the Gs had hit us at that point, Ma Deuce would not have been able to help. Examining the gun, I noted that it was new and manufactured by the Saco





## SALVADOR SITREP

My sixth and most recent trip to El Salvador left me with the impression that the military situation — at best — remains stagnant. Twelve thousand communist terrorists, supported by probably no more than 30-40,000 *masas* (the masses) continue to make life miserable for the other five million Salvadorans. Is that fair? Only to leftist sympathizers.

Salvadoran military authorities have defined three levels of terrorist activity. The initial stage, which commenced five years ago, is characterized by isolated incidents of car and bus bombings, kidnaping for ransom, destruction of utilities and coffee plantations and assassinations (always blamed on the so-called "right-wing death squads").

In Level Two this scenario is continued and combined with the employment of squad- to battalion-size units in brief contacts with the Salvadoran Army. In this phase, guerrilla bands also concentrate on the destruction and/or temporary occupation of pueblos, bridges and power plants.

The final stage of Marxist revolution is supposed to be the fielding of battalion-strength and larger groups in set-piece military operations against the Salvadoran Armed Forces. Several times within the last five years the guerrillas have

attempted to operate at this third level, presumably poised for the complete "liberation" of El Salvador. Each time they have butted heads with the Salvo Army they got their asses kicked badly. This last occurred in the fall of 1984.

The guerrillas are now back to Level Two and the Salvadoran Army appears unable to cope with them at this stage beyond some brave holding actions. They are not winning; therefore, they are losing. The tough young turks in the Salvadoran Army realize that to win, they must match the guerrilla level of activity and field squad- to platoon-size ops to beat the bad guys at their own game.

This is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future. Successful small-unit tactics can be employed only with the assistance of a competent, highly trained NCO corps. The Salvadoran Army has grown to 45,000 in just a few years but development of experienced career NCOs has lagged woefully behind. In the United States and Western Europe, the NCO corps has traditionally been mostly drawn from the large and well-established middle-class level of society. There is no such group in El Salvador.

Furthermore, the Salvadoran Army has exaggerated the problem by its own specific policies. There are only two grades of sergeants: three stripes and staff. They have no equivalent to Master Sergeant or Sergeant Major. Why? Because they

actively encourage intelligent and motivated NCOs to leave enlisted status and become officers. Thus the Salvo Army itself continues to rape and decimate its own cadres. Those soldiers that choose to remain in the enlisted ranks are given little responsibility or authority. Unless this trend is reversed, cadets and lieutenants will continue to lead all combat operations regardless of size, thus limiting their quantity and frequency. They cannot score decisive victories in the guerrilla war until the level of small-unit operations is substantially increased. I don't think this will happen in time to save El Salvador. I have observed sergeants leading combat patrols only in the Atlacatl Battalion.

Operating without the time constraints imposed by a fickle and impatient American public, the communists will fight on as long as necessary (as they demonstrated in Indochina) or until they are crushed completely. The latter is unlikely, as in addition to the Salvadoran Army's NCO problem, the U.S. Congress seems bound and determined to offer only enough assistance to maintain the status quo: never enough for a *decisive* victory. The prospects are bleak indeed. I see little hope for the future and the Salvadoran people cannot handle another decade of this nightmare. The communists will most likely succeed by default.

— Peter G. Kokalis



Defense Systems Division of the Maremont Corporation in January 1984. I also noted that it was as dry as a bone. The crew seemed bewildered by my complaints about the lack of lubrication and I later learned they were medics assigned only to carry the gun since they were headed in our direction anyway. Had the Gs attacked the 'A' camp that night, this deadly weapon would never have influenced the fight.

The medics who carried the weapon up onto the hill had lost the T&E mechanism's traversing slide-lock lever somewhere along the way. That reduced the gun's long-range effectiveness by about 80 percent. We immediately fabricated a T-bar locking stud as a field

expedient. I turned to lubricating the weapon and had it ready for action before sundown.

That was fortunate. The situation soured rapidly that evening during my second week at the camp. Second Lieutenant Lopez, Melara's XO, trotted up the hill to inform us that intercepted radio traffic indicated the Gs would probably attack our position that night. Our camp's location and purpose had been identified several nights before on a broadcast from Radio Sandino in Nicaragua. The communists saw fit to write history before the event. They announced that very shortly the camp and communications center would be destroyed by the People's Revolutionary Forces. We



**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** M114 track with Salvadoran face-lift sports M2 .50-cal. Browning aircraft machine guns.



**BELOW:** Twin fifties in front hull of M114 track. Gun on the right is non-functional as driver sits directly to the rear of it.



**BELOW:** Salvadoran trooper sports SOF decal on his M16.





instantly began organizing for defense.

On the edge of my trench, I placed the M60 and about 1,500 rounds of ammo, linked four ball to one tracer. I had an excellent view of my primary fire sector. Using a broken antenna pole, I set a limit stake to the left to avoid firing on the Ma Deuce crew which we repositioned for better cover and concealment about 100 meters to my front. I also positioned a half-case of M67 grenades in the bottom of the trench along with my M79 bloopers. I put three grenades on the top ledge of the trench along with the bandoliers of HEDP M433 (M550 fuse) 40mm rounds for the M79. After attaching an AN/PVS-2 night-vision scope to the M60, I

signaled my position ready.

Captain Melara borrowed my Galil loaded with 100-percent tracer for fire-direction purposes. He threw a few rounds into the hill across the saddle. The mortar crew began to plot on-call fire for the 60 mike-mike. They had the line and range after only two rounds. Other soldiers built a temporary barricade for the mortar out of basalt boulders. No time to fill sandbags now. Melara sent out two patrols and coordinated them with the company moving below our position. He also set out sentries. Our two demo men started to set AP mines along the perimeter and I remember thinking, "John Donovan, where the hell are you when I need you."



**ABOVE:** Kokalis trains Ma Deuce gun crew with new Maremont M2 HB. Assistant gunner is taught to spot downrange impacts for fire redirect.

**BELOW:** German WWII vintage MG 42 GPMG in caliber 7.92mm, either captured from or abandoned by Marxist guerrillas. No belts or ammunition were found with the gun.



**ABOVE:** Salvadoran muzzle brake for a .50-cal. Browning aircraft gun.

**BELOW:** .30-06 M1919A6 Browning machine gun which Kokalis put back into service.







## SOME TIMELY TECHNICAL TRAINING

A week after I jury-rigged the 'A' camp's first Ma Deuce back into action, another Maremont .50-caliber M2 HB was delivered for my attention. The crew indicated it simply would not fire. Small wonder. The bolt group had been reassembled with the extractor below the receiver's guide rail. It was frozen solid. The bolt switch had been replaced in the position for right-hand feed. The timing adjustment nut had been turned to fire the weapon when the recoiling parts were more than a quarter-inch out of battery. The belt of ammunition I was offered for testing had been carried for months Pancho Villa style and every other round was misaligned in the link. Rounds can be properly realigned by hand in M13 links for the M60 but without the mechanical advantage offered by a linking machine it's an almost hopeless task with the .50-caliber Browning links. Naturally, the unit I had been sent to help train didn't have a linking machine.

I set to work righting the wrongs and with a fresh supply of ammunition the gun was cranking again after just a few minutes of adjustment. These Maremont guns are excellent examples of the world's finest heavy machine gun. The buffer has been simplified and improved but the dovetail permitting installation of an optical sight is still absent. Their Stellite-lined barrels should hold up well in El Salvador's humid environment. Now all the unit needed was properly trained crews. That was my job.

My first class on the .50-cal. was attended by 36 corporals undergoing proficiency training at the 'A' camp and one crew from the fire-support team. These men were trained in the operation and functioning of the weapon, disassembly and assembly (including proper use of the headspace and timing gauges and the corresponding adjustments), maintenance,



**Kokalis' area in 'A'-camp hootch with his M79 blooper and Galil on the wall.**

immediate action to correct malfunctions and stoppages, employment from cover and concealment, fire discipline and long-range single-shot fire with the bolt latch (owing to inexperience, they proved unable to fire single rounds without the bolt latch), use of sights, range estimation, the characteristics and classes of fire, crew drills and hand-carry techniques. It was a tremendous amount of material to cover but the enthusiastic and attentive soldiers learned quickly and little repetition was required.

NCO training is a primary function of the camp. Before promotion, corporals and sergeants must pass a gruelling course based on that developed by the Atlacatl Battalion. The topics covered include leadership, weapons (M16A1 rifle, M79 and M203 40mm grenade launchers, .50-cal. M2 HB and M60 machine guns, 90mm recoilless rifle and the 60mm mortar) and fire control, map and compass, patrolling and ambush, offensive and defensive operations, mines and demolitions, maintenance and operation of the PRC-77 radio, camouflage, combat intelligence, first aid, fighting positions, fire and movement (using a live-

fire infiltration course), rappelling and rope climbing, hand-to-hand combat and physical training.

During the time the unit was occupied with the San Salvador road ambush, I busied myself with inspection and repair of three .30-06 Browning Model 1919A6 LMGs I located in the *cuartel's almacén* (supply room). At 32.5 lbs., the M1919A6 is not the "light" machine gun of my dreams, but it is sturdier and more reliable than the M60 can ever hope to be. Belt-fed, air-cooled and recoil-operated (gas-assisted), it was a favorite of my late comrade, Captain Larry Dring. The M1919A6 was fielded in the 1950s to offer more portability than the M1919A4. Many M1919A4s were converted to this configuration which differs most obviously from its predecessor by the addition of a bipod and shoulder stock. Two of the guns I worked on were converted A4s originally manufactured by the Saginaw Steering Gear Division of General Motors Corp. The other was manufactured as an M1919A6 by Rock Island Arsenal.

The M1919A6 also features a carrying handle as well as a lighter barrel which increases the cyclic rate to 600-675 rpm and requires the M7 flash hider with its integral blast cone for gas assist of the recoiling components. The bolt latch has been removed and the recoil spring, cov-



**Salvadoran corporals move under live fire from Browning M1919A6 LMG during infiltration course exercise complete with demolitions.**

I was assigned a secondary sector of fire 20 meters behind my pit at the edge of the hill. Stashing some of the ammo behind a large tree a few yards away, I settled in to scan the sector in front of my gun. I was told that the Gs would most likely move on us between 2400 and 0400 hours. At 2400 hours the moon went down so I removed the AN/PVS-2 scope. It would be almost worthless without the moon's dull glow. That felt better. The NVD adds considerable weight to the weapon, the tracers would shut it down and I offered too high a profile when sighting through it.

To the south, about eight clicks from us, a large fire burned in the jungle near a known guerrilla camp. Another large fire glowed in the distance to the northwest across the

Honduran border — possibly a consequence of slash-and-burn agriculture. Parachute flares added to the eerie glow. Looking like fireflies from our distance, they floated down near the border. Either the *Catrachos* (Hondurans) were nervous that night or they'd made contact with the Gs and were chasing them back across the line.

At about 0100, dogs began to bark all around the base of the hill. Someone was active in the area below our camp. Lights and movement on the south slope of the hill crept toward my secondary sector. Rather than disclose our firing positions by opening up, we heaved grenades down the hill. The guerrillas — if that's what they were — failed to make their play. Another night in El Salvador with my boots on and my eyes open.

The next morning we were told the guerrillas would attack

*Continued on page 88*

er latch and barrel jacket modified. The A6 can also be mounted to and fired from the M2 tripod.

Two of the guns were missing the M7 flash hider and retaining clip assembly and thus would not function properly. All three were equipped with an M2 tripod, but two were without the T&E mechanism. The remaining T&E mechanism was fitted with an M60 adapter, which I removed. Combining the best components from all three, I managed to assemble one complete gun. Without the proper gauges, I headspaced the barrel by the old "screw it in flush and back off two" method. I then used a swiss file to mark the barrel extension and barrel accordingly.

Ammo wasn't a big problem. A large quantity of linked ammunition was available. Two lots composed the inventory: TW 54 (Twin Cities, 1954) and K 57 (Kynoch, 1957). Stored under the usual adverse conditions of El Salvador, many links were damaged and some cases corroded. After culling the bad ammo, the gun, tripod and ammunition were brought to the hill where I quickly demonstrated the weapon's superiority as a defensive machine gun.

Probing deeper into the *almacén's* darker recesses, I turned up a surprise in the form of a tarnished gem captured from the guerrillas. Buried appropriately under a pile of musty Mauser bolt-action rifles was the rusting hulk of a German WWII MG 42 machine gun. Short-recoil operated with a gas-assist blast cone called a *düse*, the MG 42 served as the Wehrmacht's principal general-purpose machine gun after replacing the MG 34 in late 1942. In caliber 7.62mm NATO, it still holds sway in the Bundeswehr as the MG 1.

The MG 42 uses roller-locking lugs which are cammed out of locking recesses in the barrel extension. Capable of full-automatic fire only, its extremely high cyclic rate of 1,250 to 1,350 rpm quickly earned it the appellation, "Hitler's Zipper." Fabricated mostly of



**Defensive preparation at Salvadoran 'A' camp.**

sheet-metal pressings and crude in appearance, it weighs only 25.5 lbs. with its bipod, and features an excellent quick-change barrel system.

Wiping away the accumulation of grease and filth, the serial number 247e and the manufacturer's code 'cra' emerged on the left side of the receiver. The gun was manufactured by Maget Maschinen-u.-Gerätebau G.m.b.H., Berlin. But, how did the Marxist guerrillas get their hands on it? While the German DM6 nondisintegrating belt used in the HK 21 machine gun can be used, where could they obtain 7.92mm ammunition in El Salvador? As I had previously examined an MP 40 submachine gun in a residence in San Salvador, I assumed that this MG 42 was taken from a coffee plantation along with a small hoard of ammunition. I believe the gun was abandoned by the Gs — not captured by government forces — after the available ammunition was expended.

Immediately adjacent to the *cuartel's* *almacén* was the room recently designated as an armory. As the road from San Salvador to this *cuartel* is the site of frequent ambushes, the mobile repair station from the Maestranza (central ordnance depot) never visits this post. Everything must be sent to the Maestranza with a turn-around

time of two to three months. One of SOF's objectives was to establish and equip a repair station as we had done for the Atlacatl Immediate Reaction Battalion. I was assigned an armorer, previously trained at the Maestranza, and together we inventoried and set up the equipment donated by SOF. As he was a corporal enrolled in the course up on the hill, he accompanied me during my stay at the 'A' camp to receive further OJT as a small-unit armorer.

On the hill, Capt. Melara and I were able to conduct a training course on the M60 GPMG which covered the same topic outline as the Ma Deuce instruction. Special additional emphasis was placed on carrying 25-rd. teaser belts, careful reassembly procedures to assure no component (i.e., piston, sear, sear plunger and spring, firing pin, etc.) was placed in backward, and closing of the top cover only after the bolt group had been retracted. The M60 I was issued for training carried an ancient serial number, 206976, but the weapon had just arrived in-country rebuilt to issue specifications.

We also presented a course on the M16A1 rifle that stressed the relationship between the eye and sights, sight alignment, the sight picture, breathing, trigger control, firing positions, fire discipline and zeroing the individual weapon. Capt. Melara had been issued a *new* Colt-manufactured M16A1 rifle in the 9,500,000 serial-number range. I began to feel that the Salvadoran Army was starting to receive the proper goods to fight the war.

The troopers paid strict attention but I could tell it was hard for these bush veterans to keep their eyes off the Bill Bagwell Damascus steel Bowie knife that rode on my web gear. I was constantly asked to demonstrate the effectiveness of this amazing weapon. I complied in my spare time and hacked through pine boards, severed one-inch Manila rope with a single blow and shaved the hair off my left arm until it was bare.



# GETTING OUT OF A GUN JAM



A cop's nightmares come in stereo. First there's the roar of his pistol hammering away at some armed dirt-bag and then there's a sudden silence. That's when the sweat begins to stain the sheets.

The semiauto pistol he's chosen for increased firepower on the street has choked and the bad guy is rising to draw a bead. Our sleeping cop can only see the slide hanging over the web of his thumb and a vertical cartridge case obscuring his sight picture. At this point he wakes up screaming with the realization that if it happens on the street, he's a dead man. If he's smart, he'll remember the nightmare about a "stovepipe" malfunction and get in some practice clearing his weapon the next time he's on the range.

Like a lot of other aspects of practical shooting, clearing malfunctions on semiauto pistols is a skill that takes training and practice. It's well worth the time and effort,

## SEND LAWYERS, GUNS AND MONEY

If the shit hit the fan, sending Emanuel Kapelsohn would answer two of the song's demands. He's a lawyer and a firearms trainer.

There's hardly any room in a normal author's bio to list all Kapelsohn's credentials. But here are most of them: Yale B.A. (with honors), Harvard Law grad, New York Supreme Court-qualified expert witness on firearms, FBI and NRA certified firearms instructor, American Pistol Institute instructor, private investigator, bodyguard, technical editor for *Police Marksman*, corporate security adviser, A-class IPSC competitor and firearms instructor for Burlington County N.J. Police Academy.

The dreaded double-feed. Unextracted case prevents chambering new round, requiring Phase Two of Kapelsohn's Broad Spectrum emergency-action drill.

especially if your life could depend on how quickly and efficiently you get the weapon back in action.

Kept reasonably clean and used with proper ammunition and magazines, a good semiautomatic pistol will function with near-perfect reliability. In fact, the auto pistol's tolerance for little maintenance and extreme environmental conditions prompted the U.S. Army to choose John Browning's .45 as a standard military sidearm over competing revolvers. Despite all that, even a good semiauto pistol — like any mechanical device — will occasionally malfunction. When close, fast, *desperate* shooting mates with Murphy's Law, we are nearly guaranteed that if the sidearm ever malfunctions, it will do so in combat. When that happens, the shooter



by Emanuel Kapelsohn

# How to Avoid Fatal Malfunctions



**Phase One starts with the Tap: a weak-hand blow to the bottom of the magazine.**

has two options: clear the weapon and continue the engagement or die.

Efficiency in this area begins with an understanding of the common types of semiauto pistol malfunctions. Actually "stoppage" is a more appropriate term than "malfunction," since many of the things that can keep a handgun from going bang have nothing to do with a malfunction of the weapon. An empty gun, a chamber the shooter has forgotten to load, or a magazine not fully seated are examples of stoppages which are not malfunctions.

The list of common stoppages will include the following:

- 1) empty weapon
- 2) empty chamber
- 3) inert round in chamber
- 4) failure to feed
  - a) common failure to feed
  - b) slide slightly out of battery
  - c) double-feed (two rounds released from magazine)
- 5) failure to eject
  - a) stovepipe
  - b) horizontal
- 6) failure to extract
- 7) magazine not fully seated, causing
  - a) empty chamber
  - b) engagement of magazine safety
- 8) magazine fails to drop free when release pressed

There are two major schools of thought on the clearing of stoppages and the first is what I call the analytical school. Proponents of this method recommend the shooter analyze the nature of the stoppage, usually by sight or sound. Phrases like, "When you see that you have a stovepipe..." or "When you hear the hammer go 'click' instead of 'bang'..." resonate through analytical-school classrooms.

The analytical approach teaches no less than four different stoppage-clearance procedures, and the shooter is expected to select the appropriate procedure based on the type of stoppage. The logical appeal of this system is great. There's only one problem with it. Analysis takes too much precious time in a gunfight.

In the middle of an alley at zero-dark-thirty with lead flying around his ears, the shooter will *not* be able to determine by sight whether he has a stovepipe, a double-feed, a slide out of battery, or a gremlin perched on his pistol. He will probably be temporarily deafened by the firing and quite unable to tell if his hammer has made a "click" rather than a "bang." In fact, the shooter may understand nothing more about his situation than the fact that he's hauling back on the trigger and nothing is happening.

The analytical approach would require the shooter to perform a Braille examination of his weapon in the dark. That gives his opponent all the necessary time to take care-

**Phase One continues with Rack: cycling the action, keeping ejection port clear.**

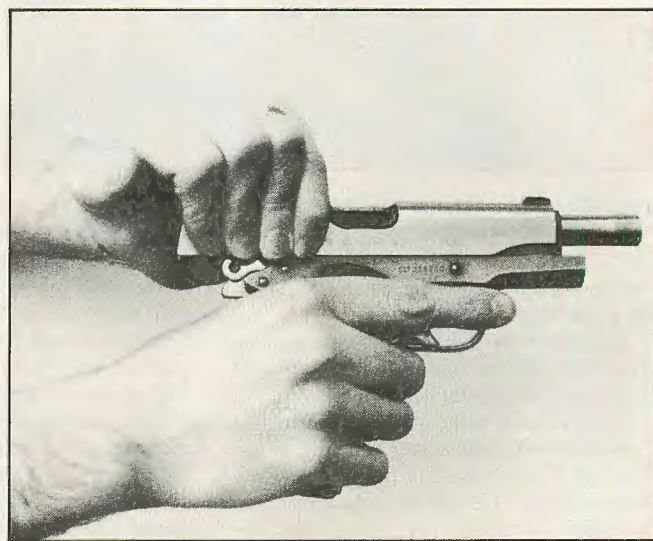
ful aim and put one between his running lights. Even if the other guy was having similar problems or ran out of ammo, the analytical approach requires cool calculation at a time when the adrenalin is pumping and most men are functioning on an internal auto pilot.

A more realistic method of clearing stoppages in an emergency is the "broad-spectrum" approach. Like the doctor who administers a broad-spectrum antibiotic such as penicillin or tetracycline rather than wasting time trying to determine the substrain of bacterium that's causing the infection, shooters who use this approach realize that in a fire fight it's not important to determine *what* the problem is. The critical issue is to get the patient back into condition; just get the weapon back into firing condition.

The *first* step when an apparent stoppage occurs with *any* firearm is to release the trigger fully and try pulling it again. Most shooters will do this automatically, but occasionally a person under stress will fail to release the trigger fully after a shot. They just keep squeezing and wondering why the weapon won't fire.

If releasing and squeezing the trigger again doesn't work, it is time to start Phase One, or Tap-Rack-Bang. The shooter 1) *taps* the magazine with the heel of the weak hand to ensure that it is fully seated, 2) *racks*





**ABOVE:** New magazine raises odds that weapon treated with Phase Two drill will function.

**TOP:** Take cover for longer Phase Two, which begins by locking back the slide and removing the magazine.

**ABOVE:** As with Phase One, Phase Two readies the weapon for action by pinching rear of slide between fingers and palm of weak hand, pulling back, and letting slide pop forward under spring pressure to chamber round.

the slide hard to the rear, letting it snap forward, and 3) *bang* — fires the pistol. Simple as these three steps may seem, a bit of technique is necessary to produce quick, consistent results.

In racking — or cycling — the slide, it is important to keep the weak hand clear of the ejection port in order to allow empty cases or loaded rounds to exit the gun without being trapped by the hand. It's also important to allow the slide to *snap forward freely* under its full spring pressure. Riding it forward with the weak hand can result in a feeding failure.

Here's how it's done. Grasp the slide with the weak hand over the top of the rear

of the slide. Clamp the slide serrations between the fingertips and the heel of the hand. You can also pinch the rear of the slide between the thumb and forefinger, but that puts the fingers, wrist, and arm in too weak a position to clear stubborn stoppages, such as an oversize round wedged in a dirty chamber. The only exception is when a large-handed shooter is handling a tiny pocket pistol, where pinching the rear of the diminutive slide may be the only way to keep the ejection port clear. Shove the slide to the rear and release your grip. Aim and try to fire.

Phase One will *almost* always solve the standard problems including empty cham-

bers, inert rounds in the chamber, unseated magazines, failures to feed, and failures to eject, including the "stovepipe." Despite the advice given by some shooting instructors, it's not necessary to position the weak hand in front of a stovepiped cartridge case to wipe it out of the ejection port. Phase One stoppage-clearance procedures — like penicillin — are about 85-percent likely to cure whatever ails you and your malfunctioning semiauto pistol.

Properly (reflexively) performed, Phase One procedures can be executed in well under two seconds. Some proponents sug-



gest speeding things up even further by omitting the magazine tap, but this makes Phase One less of a broad-spectrum remedy. I prefer the tap. Take your choice.

If Phase One doesn't work *on the first try*, forget about it and initiate Phase Two. Unlike Phase One procedures which are so fast they hardly cause an interruption in firing, Phase Two actions take five or six seconds to perform. Given the importance of time in a fire fight, you will need to take a few precautions before beginning Phase Two. If Phase One fails to reduce the stoppage, 1) *take cover*, if you're not already behind it; 2) consider using a back-up weapon if a suitable one is available; and 3) consider a tactical retreat.

If you've decided to hang in there with your primary weapon, here's what to do:

1) Lock the slide back: by manually engaging the slide stop with the strong-hand thumb while pulling the slide rearward with the weak hand.

2) Remove the magazine: You will probably need to withdraw it forcefully with the weak hand since stoppages which necessitate Phase Two procedures are also likely to prevent the box from dropping free when the magazine release is pressed.

3) Cycle the slide: by racking it back and forth *hard* several times, keeping the weak hand free of the ejection port, in order to clear the action of empty brass or live rounds. Do *not* stop because you see a round or case exit the pistol — there may be more than one thing stuck in it. Be sure by cycling the slide *several* times.

4) Load the pistol: preferably with a fresh magazine. The magazine you removed may have caused the stoppage so don't take a chance. Cycle the slide to load the chamber.

5) Aim and fire.

It is important to perform each of these steps in the proper order. For instance, if the slide is not locked back first, it may be difficult or impossible to remove the magazine. And if you forget to cycle the action (Step 3) before reloading with a new magazine, you may have failed to eliminate the case or round which caused the stoppage in the first place.

About the only stoppages that will not be cleared by the Phase One drill are double-feeds and failures to extract (two of the least common stoppages), and the most stubborn failures to eject. In such cases, the Phase Two procedures will solve the stoppage reliably if not as quickly. The system works so well, in fact, that it is the method to use with almost all box-magazine-fed semiautomatic weapons, whether pistol, rifle, or sub-machine gun.

The efficiency of this two-step system is most apparent at night when a shooter trained to perform these steps automatically can clear a stoppage as quickly as he can in the daytime, while the shooter trained in the analytical method is left groping around in the dark, trying to determine if he has a stovepipe or a double-feed. To put this point in proper perspective, police statistics (as one example) indicate that more than 65



**This stovepipe could ruin a cop's crack at a pension. Under pressure or in the dark, the usual analytical schemes fail. Kapelsohn's "broad-spectrum" remedy teaches shooters to clear malfunctions by conditioned response.**

percent of officer-involved shootings take place in dim light making visual analysis of a stoppage difficult or impossible.

Like any other weapon-handling technique, it is essential that malfunction-clearance procedures be practiced until they become *reflex* actions employed automatically when needed without much conscious thought on the part of the shooter. Training drills for Phase One can be conducted on the range by manually setting up a stovepiped cartridge case in the ejection port, with a loaded magazine in the weapon. A proper "tap and rack" should produce a "bang" when the trigger is pulled.

Phase Two procedures can be practiced by setting up a double-feed. Simply drop a single round into the chamber by hand, insert a loaded magazine in the pistol and ease the slide forward. On a whistle or some other signal, the shooter should *first* try Phase One and then go on to Phase Two when initial procedures fail as they will in the case of a double-feed. Remember, the system depends on *not* trying to figure out what is wrong with his weapon. In this exercise, the shooter *knows* that Phase One won't work, but he should still drill himself to perform it first and move to Phase Two

only when he initially fails to reduce the stoppage.

**AN IMPORTANT WARNING:** *If using live rounds to practice these techniques, practice must be conducted only at a safe firing range, with the weapon pointed safely downrange throughout. Accidental discharges do happen.*

After the basics of the stoppage-clearance drills have been learned, you may want to try the "sabotaged-magazine drill." Pairs of shooters take turns sabotaging their partner's weapon and magazines by doing such things as emptying the chamber, pressing the magazine release to pop the magazine slightly out of place, and *staggering* the magazines with cartridges, empty cases or dummy rounds. Pistol and magazines are then replaced in the shooter's belt without giving him a chance to examine them. On each whistle, the shooter tries to fire one shot at the target. If his weapon will not fire, he does what he must to get a shot off as quickly as possible. The drill continues until the shooter has exhausted all of the sabotaged magazines.

**CAUTION:** This exercise should not be done with the lightweight Colt Commander, Star PD, or other pistols with aluminum feed ramps, since the mouths of empty cases may scar the ramps. The only other concern is that empty cases loaded into the magazines must not be inserted base forward, as

*Continued on page 78*





**ABOVE:** Villages went up in flames in the fighting — sometimes from friendly fire and sometimes from Charlie's fire.



**LEFT:** The VC sometimes mined graveyards. This tank went down early in the fighting for Pleiku.

**T**READ-HEADS were never considered much of a threat by the VC, but this armor outfit was bound to be tough. Their reputation was plastered all over the area south of Pleiku. The local Viets had put up a huge sign to welcome them in a sort of left-handed manner.

A carefully lettered message painted on a hundred feet of white cotton cloth let the tankers know where they stood after the move to the Pleiku area. "Welcome Com-

**SOF VIETNAM**



# PLEIKU PUNCH-UP

## Armor Turns the Tide at Tet

by Ralph Zumbro

### ARMORED WARRIOR

Ralph Zumbro enlisted in the Army in July of 1957 and trained with the 101st Airborne Division. He spent some time in Germany with the 505th Airborne Battle Group of the 8th Infantry Division. 1962 seemed like a good time for a change so Zumbro got out of the Army and tried his hand at underwater construction and traveling around as a yacht captain. When things started heating up in Vietnam, Zumbro re-enlisted and volunteered to go over. He did a tour from June 1967 to June 1968 with 1st Battalion, 69th Armor.





An M48 on "paddy patrol" looks for trouble in the hot sun. Photo: Ralph Zumbro

pany 'A' From Bong Son. Please Leave Our Women Alone And Keep Your Damn Tanks Out Of Our Rice Paddies." It looked like I was in for a long tour.

When I shipped into Vietnam and joined Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor, I was sure my experience as a gunnery instructor at Grafenwohr would qualify me for a tank commander's slot. No way.

The best of the conventionally trained USAREUR tankers were strictly bush-league alongside these guys. They could fight in towns, rice paddies and even deep jungles. They didn't just operate their M48 tanks, they wore them like a grunt wears his combat gear. The crews thought as one man and they could hip-shoot the turrets like old-time gunfighters. The most my experience and qualifications rated was a gunner's seat. I was to be apprenticed to a master craftsman, until the outfit figured I was fit for a command of my own.

The company couldn't afford to take chances. They were the *entire* armor support for the Air Cav. That made the veteran TCs in Alpha Company very flexible and capable soldiers. They taught new tankers back-scratching, house-wrecking, bank-shots, bunker-busting, trench-cleaning and other esoteric skills that had been modified for the war in Vietnam. The Bong Son Plain was a giant classroom. You learned and graduated — or you died.

I was finally slated to make the grade after an NCO refresher course at Pleiku. When I got back to Alpha, things were in total turmoil. We were being ordered off

temporary loan to the Air Cav and sent back to a highland base of the 4th Infantry Division. Intel said enemy activity in that area had almost tripled. They figured an appearance by some metal monsters might shake the enemy confidence.

During preparations for the shift in AOs, I discovered a sergeant had rotated in and filled my tank-commander slot. The First Shirt tagged me to run ammo, fuel and supplies for our task force. It kept me on the road most of the time and I only managed to get out on patrol with the tanks when I had some spare time and could find a tank with a short crew.

As Tet approached, Pleiku air base fell under an increasing number of enemy probes. Since their only defenses were machine-gun towers about 50 yards apart and lining a single-apron barbed-wire perimeter, the base got penetrated regularly. The gooks had already managed to make scrap-metal out of a couple of Air Force planes. People were getting nervous and the Pleiku commander finally called General Stone at 4th Division to lend a hand with defense.

Orders came down through First Sergeant Quinton and we were directed to take a few trucks over to the air base and set up an ammo and fuel point for a platoon of tanks reinforced by a heavy section. It was an all-day affair and I was in charge of the

preparations. Not that I bitched, mind you. Once the supplies were delivered we took full advantage of Air Force chow, hot showers, an NCO Club, PX and movies. With only eight tanks to worry about, we figured we had it made. That's when the VC decided to burst our bubble.

Just before dawn one morning a battalion of about 600 slopes cut the wire, blew out three machine-gun towers and hit the airstrip at a dead run headed for the revetments and hangars. They had holed the perimeter but the VC didn't know about our tanks. If they did, they likely didn't suspect we could get rolling before the primary damage had been done.

As veteran bush-beasts, we'd learned that security for our tanks was best provided by tankers. The crews slept in and on the tanks with someone at the gun controls 24 hours a day. Before the echo of the explosions at the guard towers had died out we were cranked up and rolling.

I was with the 3rd Platoon CO, Second Lieutenant Joe Somelik, and his crew when he ordered his tanks forward. As flames shot skyward on the perimeter, I jumped off the vehicle and ran for the ammo dump. Sergeant Hiemes in the dozer tank led the counterattack. He was followed by the six-tank with the rest of the platoon's tanks fanned out behind. A stray from 1st Platoon which had been at company base for repairs struggled to bring up the rear.

They rolled right into a tanker's paradise. Gooks were milling around in the dark all over the area trying to get organized and go



for the parked aircraft. Co-ax and cupola-mounted machine guns tore into them and many were mowed down by 90mm canister rounds. I pissed and moaned about missing the action until the first tanks started to come back for reloading about an hour after the fight started.

The crews laughed and jabbered like kids on a picnic while off-duty airmen hung all over the tank hulls listening to the warrior tales. It didn't take me long to piece together what had happened out there on the airstrip.

Our tanks had clanked onto the scene by driving down the taxi ramp between the hangars and the fighter revetments. That was a welcome sight for the Air Force maintenance crews who had been sleeping around the planes with their M16s. They rolled across the active runway and turned in a flanking movement to charge the VC formation. About 100 yards from the nearest terrified VC, they switched on the tube-mounted xenon searchlights. The gooks writhed in the brilliance of 75-million candlepower and stared back in shock. The tankers opened up with everything that would fire. When it was over the airmen policed up some 200 enemy bodies. There was a regular river of blood trails leading back out through the wire.

For the next few days around Pleiku Air Base we were bigger celebrities than Bob Hope. It seemed like everyone on the base, from Airmen First Class on up through pilots and wing commanders, wanted a guided tour of one of our tanks or a ride around the perimeter. In the clubs it was chaos. Whenever we ordered anything, the nearest airman hauled out his wallet to cover the tab.

It was difficult with all the swelled heads in his platoon but Lt. Somelik tried to keep things tight. He patrolled every morning before dawn using IR gear to make sure that the perimeter stayed cool. It seemed like a good time for me to make another pitch for a slot in a combat tank. The ammo bunker was organized and my SP5s were a responsible bunch, so one morning I hitched a ride with Somelik in the 3-6 tank. It was the first day of Tet.

At 0200, a voice attached to a shadow woke me. The shadow thrust a canteen cup of coffee and a mess-kit full of real scrambled eggs, bacon and burned toast under my nose. The coffee had a heavy load of sugar and 7 Crown in it. I was ready to go to work. We quickly checked out the tank and tightened the track end-connectors — all 320 of them. It's a pain in the ass at that time of morning but it's got to be done. A broken track in combat can badly screw up a crew's health records.

Roll-out was at 0300. We went out the air-base gate at 50-yard intervals, spread into a rough wedge, and headed for our first checkpoint — a commo relay station on a ridge east of Pleiku. The lieutenant had a full crew so I rode shotgun, perching on the turret and hanging onto the sky-mount .50-cal that had been welded to the turret. Bronco Kindred was riding as loader. The last



time I'd run into him he had been a driver on the 3-2 tank. The gooks destroyed his vehicle with a command-detonated, 250-pound TNT charge. He survived but the entire crew had spent some time in the hospital.

The gunner was a sergeant named Wally and the driver was a new man fresh out of armor school at Ft. Hood. I figured we were in pretty good shape even if the shit hit the fan.

We rolled up to the relay station at about 0430. Jumping off the tank, the lieutenant and I went in to check the place out, hoping to scrounge coffee for the crews at the same time. The CO there, a Signal Corps Lieutenant, was an easy-going type who wanted us to convoy a busload of USO people back as far as Pleiku. The entertainers were a mixed

bag: a Philippine country-western band and two Australian strippers who had come to the outpost to give the troops a little break in the routine. They had stayed the night rather than chance being ambushed on the roads after dark. There was not much danger of that but the Signal Corps guys didn't want the entertainers — particularly the strippers — to know it.

The 4th Division CG was slated to drop in on the comm base by helicopter the day the USO people did their number. He would not approve of the women staying the night, so the commo techs conjured up a fake mortar raid to force the general to keep his distance. A man was stationed outside the radio bunker with a sack of concussion grenades and every time there was any communication





with the general's chopper, he would heave two or three over the wire for effect. The general sounded very concerned and cautioned the base commander to take no chances with the ladies. They stayed the night but now it was time to get them back on schedule. The USO bus swung into our column behind the 3-4 tank.

Dropping our charges off safely at 0600, we heard the sound of small arms punctuated by the clang of light mortars. Something was happening in beautiful downtown Pleiku. Captain Allen, the Alpha CO, cut in on the radio, warning of an NVA battalion that was raising hell in the city. He wanted us to "probe" the area and see how bad things were. I may have missed the fight on the airfield, but I was bound to be smack in

**Crashing through a palm-tree grove, this tank cruises toward an enemy position.**  
Photo: Ralph Zumbro

the middle of this one.

Rolling into the city we met two ARVN tanks in full retreat. They looked very professional in black berets and polished turrets. If only they were headed in the right direction. They were scared shitless and looking for a place to get safely hull-down. You could see the whites of their eyes at 100 yards as they told of RPGs and B-40 rockets crashing through the streets. According to the ARVN, the NVA were remnants of two battalions trying to regroup inside the city. Capt. Allen called off the probe and we got new orders.

"Just go in there, link up with our infantry and hash them up," he said over the radio. We deployed and rumbled into town at 0700. There were no American grunts on the scene. We were it. Eight tanks and a few Air Force hitchhikers facing what amounted to an NVA battalion. It was time to consider the situation and terrain.

Tanks and infantry have been a functioning team since armor first rumbled onto the battlefield in World War I. They should compose an integrated team during combat in a built-up area where armor mobility and visibility is restricted. But we had no infantry. Our tanks would have to crawl in with the hatches open and heads exposed. We would have to be our own eyes this trip.

On a main street south of the business district we began taking heavy fire. It was mostly small arms that spanned off the armor but there was some disturbing .50-cal and mortar fire which made us realize this was not going to be a cakewalk. Lt. Somelik eyeballed the situation and expanded the line of tanks as we clanked into combat. Halfway through the turn, the 1st platoon tank took a rocket under the bow and a wicked blast of LMG fire. Smoke began to boil out of the hatches. The driver was killed and the loader — an older man we knew as "Pappy" — was hit and blown off the turret.

The tank commander was blown out of his hatch and the gunner was burned before he got out — under his own steam and cussing a blue streak. I felt for him. All he ever wanted was to be a tanker and since he had worked his butt off for me handling ammunition, I had wrangled him a slot in that tank. He low-crawled down the road about 20 yards where the six-tank commander, Cheyenne Black, took him aboard.

At about the same time someone came on the air screaming about taking fire from a nearby building. The Company Commander didn't hesitate with his orders. "Well, blow it away."

Back at his CP, the captain was trying to keep the situation under control. He had one platoon in contact, one convoying trucks down to Chio Rio and one setting up a new company base camp in a remote area. While he was not known for innovative tactics, he *did* have the standard GI reaction to a bad situation: *attack*.

By 0800 that morning some friendly infantry began to drift into Pleiku. They were Montagnard Popular Forces led by a Special Forces A-team. They weren't used to working with tanks but the SFs gave them a quick briefing and they divided up to support individual tanks. It was all we needed to turn the fight around in a hurry.

We punched our way through a city block of houses and gardens until we were hit with heavy rocket fire. The dozer tank took one in the turret and began billowing smoke. The crew unassed and headed to the rear where the battalion recon platoon was organizing a CP. Lt. Somelik was going to shift tanks to cover the hole in our line but a voice over the radio changed his mind.

"Chopper 3-6, this is Black Watch Nin-





er. I'll fill your gap." The Lieutenant and I looked at each other in disbelief. A Huey gunship settled into the hole left by the dozer tank. Unfortunately, things got hot after about two minutes and our airborne ally also had to unass the area. This was turning into a genuine combined-arms fight.

Zigzagging through the rubble, a Green Beret sergeant rushed up to our tank and told us that the NVA were mixing with civilians. Innocent people were being held in the houses we were taking under fire with the tank weapons. We pulled back to figure that one out and ran across some U.S. infantry. I'll never know where they came from. There were no trucks, no APCs, nothing. They just appeared. The lieutenant dismounted and went off with a radioman to find their CO. His orders were for us to sit tight and fire on "targets of opportunity." We interpreted that to mean mill around and shoot up the enemy but don't wander off.

I assumed command of the tank since the senior assigned crewman only had three weeks in-country and we found a low spot that gave us some protection to scan the area. We were contemplating a long-range

**American Armor punches into an enemy outpost near Pleiku. Photo: Ralph Zumbro**

shot at what had been an ARVN compound when an Air Force FAC came on the net describing a building and asking who could hit it. No problem. We could do it. The observer indicated he had seen a dozen NVA enter the building. He'd mark it with WP and we could open up when we had the range.

As soon as the smoke appeared, we drilled 90mm HE delay into the building's foundation. The idea was to keep pumping cannon fire until we blew the floor out through the ceiling. On the eighth round, the main gun jammed.

Bronco almost got a hernia trying the extractor, but that shell wouldn't go in or out. We swung the turret so that the gun tube pointed over the right rear where I figured we'd be safest from hostile incoming. With Wally and Bronco watching for trouble, I eased out, dropped down and grabbed some hardware out of a sponson box. I had to assemble the rammer staff, put a bell rammer on it and pound that cartridge out back-

ward. Bronco took the opportunity to clear empties out of the turret before the clutter could jam the traverse gear. While I struggled, the Green Beret sergeant showed up and told me he'd always wanted to try the armored battalions. He said he was rapidly changing his mind.

I finally cleared the weapon and started to put the rammer away. That's when I saw something that nearly brought tears to my eyes. Bronco heaved the last batch of empties out along with a case of Bud — some of it still cool. We snatched the tabs on two of them and drank to each other's health. It was time to get back into the war.

Just as we got squared away, the six-tank got the left track shot up. With one tank brewing up and one disabled and abandoned, our strength was beginning to dwindle. Four tanks were still hammering the NVA positions so I rolled 3-6 up to Cheyenne Black's cripple and left two men in the turret to provide cover while we worked to repair the track.

By 1030 we managed to get enough spare track sections together to reassemble Black's running gear. We were short of





**Headache for Charlie: Crewmen on an M48 tank watch as an F-4 Phantom drops its payload on a VC position. Photo courtesy of DOD**

ammo but one of the recon APCs had gone to escort my ammo trucks in for a quick reload. Captain Allen had withdrawn 2nd Platoon under SFC Taylor from a convoy staging area and sent them into town from the west end. Taylor effectively smashed the NVA defensive line by hitting its exposed flank with 250 tons of bad news. He did what tankers do best — shoot, scoot and communicate.

As we backed away from the action to re-arm, the driver came up on the intercom. "There's some clown in civvies with a shotgun coming in from the left."

It turned out to be the local Catholic missionary priest from Pleiku. He did not seem very pious when I asked what he was doing with the scatter-gun. "I'm looking for the sonofabitch that blew up my school," he replied. "Can you help the mission compound? It's under fire."

After getting over the shock of hearing that kind of language out of a priest, Lt. Somelik offered some help. "Sure thing, padre, and if you'll wait a while, we'll get you an infantry squad."

The priest was in no mood to wait.

"Thanks, soldier, but I know where he lives and it's personal." He walked off with his double-barrel and we never saw him again. It was becoming a weird war.

Somelik reached the six-tank on the radio and Black picked up a recon APC to help pry the nuns and nurses loose. Later on, Stanley told how it went.

"Darnedest thing I ever saw, Sarge. We demolished the wall, swung left and made room for the track. I got out to look around and here's about a half-dozen broads with suitcases looking like they were waiting for a bus. They were all half-looped and this little Vietnamese nun handed me a pint martini — with a cherry in it. They loaded up on the tank and we all got out of there. Recon took the women out and we went over to your resupply point."

My two crazies, Gray and Richardson, managed to get separated from their armored escort so they just drove their

ammo trucks toward the sound of tank guns, stopping when they ran into U.S. infantry. I got the resupply operation working smoothly by 1300. Two tanks were rearming at a time and another four were holding a perimeter. Lieutenant Somelik took me aside. "Sarge, you were airborne infantry, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir, what did you have in mind?"

"Well, we've got one body to find and the dozer to check out. Bronco was a tunnel rat down south, and I figure that between the three of us we could get it done while the crews load up."

Bronco had one of those three-shot grenade launchers, the Lieutenant had his XM177 and I had the usual M3 and a .45 auto. We eased down the street to the point where we'd originally been hit *and found* a platoon of U.S. infantry, part of an A-team and a dozen or so Yards mopping up. It would be hard to get to the dozer because the NVA were holed up in a row of houses and raining fire on us.

We recovered Pappy's debris-covered

*Continued on page 86*





**SOF HISTORY**



# MORE ON **Skorzeny**

## Germany's Classic Commando

by Blaine Taylor



*Otto Skorzeny did much more during World War II than pull off the daring snatch mission for which he became famous. His raid to rescue Benito Mussolini from a Gran Sasso prison hurled the Nazi commando into prominence, but the scar-faced Skorzeny was not one to rest on his laurels. There was a war to be fought and Skorzeny was in the thick of things right up until Germany's surrender. In the second of a two-part series, SOF reveals some of the lesser-known exploits of "The most dangerous man in Europe."*

**I**RONICALLY, Skorzeny — whose very name was a byword for daring, unexpected assaults — led a relatively normal life until July 1943. The man whose reputation and fortunes were to be forever identified with those of Adolf Hitler was neither a die-hard Nazi Stormtrooper nor a Prussian Junker. He'd been a hunter before the war, but the thought of being a professional soldier never crossed his mind.

He was born on 12 June 1908 in Vienna, the son of Anton and Flora Sieber Skorzeny. Most of the men on his maternal side were Army officers under the Austrian Habsburg

**Firm Allies: Hungarian Regent Admiral Nicholas Horthy (left) with Adolf Hitler for a march past of German Army troops in August, 1938. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Signal Corps**

monarchy that ended in abdication late in 1918. Skorzeny's forbears fought Turks and Tartars much as he would later oppose Italians, Hungarians, Russians, Yugoslavians and Americans.

The loss of World War I and the subsequent worldwide depression brought hard times to the Skorzeny family but young Otto managed to graduate on 11 December 1931 from the University of Vienna with an engineering degree.

During his student days Skorzeny participated in the dueling sport that later earned him the nickname of "Scarface" in the American press. He joined the *Schlagende Verbindungen* (Dueling Society) and fought a total of 15 duels.

Even after the Nazis came to power, Skorzeny considered himself to be apolitical but he wanted somehow to be at least marginally involved in his country's affairs, so he joined the fledgling Austrian Nazi

Party in 1934 — a move vigorously opposed by both of his parents. In 1936, he joined the Austrian versions of the SS and Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei — Secret State Police) and helped bring about the Nazi takeover of Austria in 1938.

When war came to Europe the following year, Skorzeny tried to join the German Luftwaffe as a pilot but was rejected as "too old." After initial training on the ground in communications at a Vienna depot, Skorzeny transferred to the Waffen SS and even spent some time as a member of the Adolf Hitler *Leibstandarte* (Lifeguard Regiment). Although technically an enlisted man, he was classified as an officer cadet, which meant that he could work his way out of the ranks toward an officer's commission someday.

He was sent to Das Reich (The Nation) Division as an artillery regiment technical expert but his anti-establishment attitudes kept getting him into hot water with his superiors. Did his men need tank treads? Very well. He simply organized a night-time raid on the Divisional warehouse and stole them. Another time, he took much-needed tires from a supply depot at pistol-point. His personnel folder was looking worse all the time.

The Polish campaign of 1939 and the fall of Belgium, Holland and France in the spring of 1940 all passed without Skorzeny's having fired a single shot or having one fired at him. Bored, he thought the war was over. Everyone should be allowed to simply go home.

After peaceful marches into Nazi-allied Rumania and Hungary in April 1941, Skorzeny's regiment took part in the German invasion of Yugoslavia. The Regent, Prince Paul, had his pro-German government overthrown in a palace coup and Hitler meant to make an example of Yugoslavia. The Luftwaffe bombed Belgrade, and tanks rolled across the frontier.

Skorzeny came under fire for the first time in face-to-face confrontations with armed troops. When he saw a mob of them approaching his trucks on a dusty back road, he motioned to his men to hide. In a typically bold move, he proceeded to capture more than 60 enemy soldiers without firing a shot. Skorzeny was promptly made a first lieutenant for this exploit and his prior conduct problems were quietly forgotten.

Camped on the Polish-Russian frontier on the shores of the Bug River with Das Reich Division on 22 June 1941, Skorzeny was shocked by the announcement that Germany was invading the Soviet Union. The fighting was fierce, the casualties high and Skorzeny learned first-hand that the Russians were to be a very different brand of opponent than those Germany had fought previously.

After 18 months of combat on the Russian Front, Skorzeny was wounded in the back of the head by shrapnel. He lay unconscious for several hours before some Waffen SS troops found him and evacuated him to an aid station. Terrible headaches





plagued him following recovery and in January 1943, Skorzeny was on a hospital train headed home. He expected to be back to the fight in a few weeks but it would be another two years before Otto Skorzeny would fight the Russians again — under very different circumstances.

The Allies were not without their own commando exploits during the war. While Skorzeny was fighting as a conventional German soldier, the British reactivated their commandos and tried to kill or kidnap Field Marshal Rommel. They also popped up for raids on the French port of St. Nazaire and an attack at Dieppe on the Atlantic coast of France.

In June 1942, British-trained Czech paratroopers landed in Czechoslovakia and assassinated the SS Reich Protector there, General Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's top lieutenant. Skorzeny also read about the German commando raid in May 1940 that had captured the "impregnable" Belgian fortress Eben Emael on the Albert Canal, as well as of German parachute operations in Holland and on Crete. He never dreamed that any of this would affect his own career but political and military events in Russia and North Africa altered the situation dramatically.

In November 1942, Rommel was defeated by Montgomery at El Alamein as the Americans landed on the coast to his rear. In May 1943, all Axis forces in North Africa surrendered en masse. In February 1943, the German 6th Army surrendered to the Russians at Stalingrad and the war's turning point had been reached. When Germany was defeated by the Russians at the battle of Kursk in July 1943, the war was well on the way to being lost.

Hitler could now only win a vague political victory. The Allies demanded Germany's "unconditional surrender" at the February 1943 Casablanca Conference and that forced the Germans to fight to the bitter end. For Hitler and the Nazis — particularly

**Success at the Burgberg: Skorzeny (left) and his chief of staff, Capt. Adrian von Fölkersam (center), walk across the fortress square after the Hungarian stronghold had been taken by German troops. Photo courtesy of Bundesarchiv, West Germany**

in light of what was then secretly being done to the Jews in the East — it had to be victory or the rope.

In 1943, Hitler decided to revitalize his own commando capabilities. These *Brandenburgers* were Germany's only hope for forcing a political settlement. As his regular armies were defeated in conventional battles, Hitler sought to prolong the war by staging bold commando operations that would have dramatic impact on the Allied domestic fronts. The hope was that the Germans could win sympathy in high places for the capitalist Nazis who were battling against the communist Russians.

As Hitler decided on creating commando troop units again, Himmler vowed that these new men would be Waffen SS troops under his own command. That limited command choices and sealed Otto Skorzeny's fate. Circumstances placed Skorzeny in the right place at precisely the right moment in history. His selection as commando leader was also influenced by fellow Austrian and SS General Ernst Kaltenbrunner who remembered that "sensible fellow" from the Miklas incident back in 1938.

The first battalion of commandos was placed under the new Captain Skorzeny in April 1943 and a second was slated for activation shortly thereafter. The first of many wrangles with Admiral Canaris immediately took place over personnel and supply requirements for the commandos but the junior officer refused to be buffaloed. He brought in Radl and set him to work cutting through the yards of High Command red tape to get the men and materiel that Skorzeny needed to become operational.

He set up his new commando school at a

hunting lodge outside Berlin that spring. Skorzeny wanted pistols with silencers but Hitler had forbidden their manufacture in Germany because he considered it a dishonorable way to wage war. Again, Skorzeny wouldn't let the matter drop. He traveled to Holland and — using captured British codes — posed as a member of the Dutch underground. He nonchalantly radioed London to airdrop some to him. They did and Skorzeny discovered his penchant for unorthodox methods would serve him well in his new post.

Despite initial successes, the German High Command and its cumbersome bureaucracy seemed determined to resist and thwart Skorzeny's mission but he kept pushing. When he wanted the Germans to copy the famous British Sten Gun, the Army refused, citing Hitler's order which restricted production of weapons that were deficient at long ranges. The English would create all sorts of exotic weaponry for their commandos, but Skorzeny was forced to use regular-issue equipment or steal what he needed.

Prior to being tapped by Hitler for the Mussolini rescue, Skorzeny had participated in the planning of two proposed raids: one into Persia (today Iran) and another deep into Russia — both behind enemy lines. The Persian plan was to encourage Iranian tribesmen to fight the local British and Russians, while the Russian adventure was a cherished idea of Himmler's to destroy the blast furnaces at Magnitogorsk far behind the Ural Mountains.

Skorzeny didn't believe he yet had either the men or the materiel to carry out the Magnitogorsk raid and the promised planes for the Persian drop never materialized. One day, SS Lieutenant Colonel (later General) Walther Schellenberg arrived from Himmler's staff to see what the delay was. He agreed with Skorzeny that the plans couldn't be carried out and told the junior officer how to avoid both missions: feign great interest,





constantly delay, then quietly shelve the project. The tactic worked perfectly.

That was how Skorzeny spent his first four months of command. Then came the lunch in the Hotel Eden that lazy Sunday afternoon in Berlin...

With the rescue of Benito Mussolini over, Major Otto Skorzeny was asked to assess the vulnerability of Hitler's own FHQ, the Wolf's Lair. He was the undisputed champion of special warfare but the SS security officers responsible for the Führer's safety were far from pleased to hear him say, "A determined and ingenious enemy will always find a way in."

His new standing in Hitler's eyes gave Skorzeny two prized advantages. The first was a battalion of special troops for each of Germany's many battle fronts, and the second was the chance to gauge the Third Reich's powerful leaders at close quarters. This knowledge was to serve him well many times in the years ahead.

He also acquired the services of a very valuable volunteer officer: 29-year-old Captain Baron Adrian von Fölkersam, who spoke fluent Russian, French, English and German. He had studied economics at both Berlin and Vienna Universities. He was a welcome addition to Radl, and brought with him 4,000 other volunteers. Navy and Luftwaffe men now also flocked to join the ranks of the famous Otto Skorzeny's elite force.

Hitler had Skorzeny's next assignment ready to launch. He was to prepare kidnap missions against two internationally known figures: French Marshal Henri Pétain, hero of World War I and head of the neutralist Vichy regime in France, and Yugoslav Communist Partisan Marshal Josip Broz

**The mission that never was: Skorzeny was ordered to kidnap French Marshal Henri Pétain but the mission was scrubbed in October 1943. Here, Hitler greets the WWI hero and leader of Vichy France (left) on 24 October 1940. Photo courtesy of U.S. Signal Corps**

Tito. Nothing came of the first mission, but Skorzeny did get into the field in the attempt to kill Tito.

As in all his operations, Skorzeny went ahead of his officers and men to Yugoslavia. From Belgrade, he and two sergeants drove a Mercedes over country roads through partisan areas. It may have been foolhardy but it was typical of Skorzeny's swashbuckling style. Do the most improbable thing and it will succeed, he reasoned.

In May 1944, after a month of searching, Tito was located with a British military mission at Drvar in Western Bosnia. Skorzeny sent von Fölkersam to inform the local German Army general commanding troops in the Dvar area — which Tito's men ruled at night — that he would infiltrate the region with commandos disguised as Partisans.

The general — jealous of Skorzeny's success with Mussolini — wanted the honor of the Tito mission himself. He stalled the commandos and launched a full-scale bomber, paratrooper and glider-borne invasion of the Drvar Valley on 25 May 1944. They advertised the attack by sending reconnaissance planes to scout the area in depth and the Germans found nothing but Tito's uniform in his cave headquarters. Tito escaped and went on to lead his country for several decades.

Back in Germany, Skorzeny found himself involved with German secret weapons

where he learned about midget submarines and human-piloted torpedos for use against Allied surface naval craft. During the Allied invasion of Italy at the Anzio bridgehead during January-May 1944, Skorzeny sent 20 such torpedos against the enemy fleet. Losing six men, he netted one warship sunk, one cruiser damaged and 6,000 tons of merchant shipping put out of action.

As it became clear that the Allies were going to hit the beaches of France, Skorzeny, like Rommel, scoured the coastline of Europe trying to predict where the British, Americans and Canadians might land. After studying the local naval charts, he actually did locate 10 of the beachheads, but failed to identify Allied prefabricated harbors from aerial photos taken over English disembarkation points.

Nazi Germany, ringed by hostile armies pressing in on all sides, was in desperate straits. In the East, its satellites were switching sides to the Russians one by one. Finland, Rumania and Bulgaria followed Italy's lead. Despite that, Hitler managed to prolong the war for almost another full year — and Skorzeny played a vital part in the success of the stop-gap policy.

General Jodl summoned him to a briefing at the Wolf's Lair on 10 September 1944. The meeting began the second most important mission of Skorzeny's career. In conference with Skorzeny, Himmler, Keitel and von Ribbentrop, the Führer explained that Hungary — Germany's main bastion to the Southeast, containing 120 Soviet divisions and almost a million German troops — was about to change sides through a coup from the top.

Germany's sole source of bauxite for the new Messerschmidt jets was to be turned over to the Russians in a secret peace negotiated by Hitler's ally since 1938 — Hungarian Regent and Admiral Miklos (Nicholas) von Horthy, 72. The betrayal would cut off 70 German divisions and leave Italy, Greece and Austria open to Soviet invasion. The Reich itself would be threatened. The Red Army was only 100 miles from Budapest.

The Führer came to the point. "You, Skorzeny, will deal with this Admiral Horthy." It was to be the Gran Sasso all over again but with an important difference. The "ally" to be "rescued" obviously suspected some such action from Germany and was hiding in a fortified castle located in the very heart of Budapest. His safe-house was surrounded by the entire Hungarian Army. The fortress might have to be taken with a frontal assault and that would result in heavy casualties.

Jodl promised Skorzeny one of Hitler's private planes, a glider squadron and three battalions — two of them parachutists. The good news was that he was given a document signed by Hitler stating "all personnel, military and civil, will assist Major Skorzeny by every means and will forward all his wishes."

As a student, he had toured Horthy's Citadel on the Burgberg — Castle Hill —



many times and knew well the strength of its thick, stone ramparts. Could they be taken? How?

A few days later he was masquerading in civilian clothes, touring Budapest as Dr. Solar Wolff from Cologne. He concluded that only a major, all-out assault could breach the castle's defenses. A glider operation or parachute assault was impossible. The only suitable landing or drop zone was ringed by tall buildings from which heavy fire could be directed at his men. That was only one of Skorzeny's problems.

Hungary's neighbors — Russia and Poland — were not German allies. An assault on the historic seat of the government might force the Hungarians into the Soviet camp. Tact and diplomacy — not brute firepower — was obviously the answer.

Skorzeny turned his thoughts to the Hungarian Regent. Admiral Horthy had ruled Hungary ever since he had crushed a native communist insurrection in 1919 following the fall of the Austrian Hapsburg dynasty. Why would Horthy even think of negotiations with Soviet dictator Josef Stalin? If the Russians took over, certainly Horthy himself would be executed, Skorzeny reasoned. After snooping about, Skorzeny discovered the reason.

The Admiral's second son (a first had been killed on the Russian Front) — Miklos "Miki" Horthy — was a well-known playboy on the Budapest nightclub scene and also the darling of his father. He was also the Regent's successor-designate and the admiral's chief negotiator with Russian secret agents who'd convinced the Horthys that their regime could somehow survive within the Soviet sphere once Germany had been defeated.

**A commando no longer, SS Lt. Col. Skorzeny (left) directs troops in a conventional battle on the Oder River Front against Soviet forces in the spring of 1945. Photo: Ullstein**



**Otto Skorzeny enjoys a cigarette in his cell in the witness wing of the Nuremberg jail in November 1945. Skorzeny continued to deny he was sent to kill Eisenhower and other high-ranking American officers. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Signal Corps**

Here was the chance Skorzeny had been seeking. He had found a way to avoid a costly attack on the Burgberg. He designed Operation Mickey Mouse to kidnap the Admiral's wayward son. The captive would be used to blackmail the Regent into remaining aligned with Nazi Germany. Skorzeny struck suddenly on 15 October 1944.

His top staff for the mission included Radl, von Fölkersam, Werner Hunke, Wilhelm Gallent, Gerhard Lochner and Ulrich Milius at the head of about 700 men. Skorzeny learned from Hitler's Ambassador in Budapest — SS General Dr. Edmund Veessenmayer — that "Miki" Horthy had a secret meeting to attend with representatives of the elusive Marshal Tito. The conference would take place on the second floor of a building close to the Danube River. An apartment on the third floor was rented by Skorzeny's commandos. Von Fölkersam and others were stationed outside, out of sight of the main entrance. Germans in civilian clothes waited in a local park, while others in German *Feldendarmen* (military police) uniforms strolled casually out front. Since there were thousands of German soldiers in Budapest, no one would become suspicious.

A few moments after Miki's arrival, "Dr. Wolff" — also in civilian clothes — parked his car in front of the meeting place near a conspicuous Hungarian Army truck full of armed troops guarding Horthy.

The operation began at 1005. Quietly, the men on the third floor descended as the "MPs" darted through the ground floor door. Firing began immediately as the guard troops started shooting at the doorway. As other Hungarian troops rushed to their aid, "Dr. Wolff" summoned help by blowing a

whistle three times, then leaped behind his Mercedes which was quickly riddled by machine-gun bullets.

Von Fölkersam arrived and was slightly wounded in the fire fight as he helped drive the Hungarians from the truck to the doorway of a building next to the meeting place. As Skorzeny rushed forward, he saw that more Hungarians were stationed inside as reinforcements and lobbed a "potato masher" stick grenade into the entranceway, the top of which collapsed onto the troops. His commandos followed suit, trapping the rest of the soldiers inside the building.

Skorzeny bounded up the steps and inside the building met his commandos on the way down. They had Miki Horthy and three other prisoners in tow. Horthy was loudly yelling all sorts of dire threats. Skorzeny saw a nearby carpet and told his men, "Wrap him in the rug!" Trussed up inside and tied with a curtain cord, Miki was transported in a waiting van to the airport and flown to Vienna. The entire action had taken only 10 minutes, six minutes longer than the mission on the Gran Sasso.

The operation was a success but it failed in its intended political purpose. Admiral Horthy decided to call the German's bluff. At 1400 that same day, Horthy spoke over Radio Budapest announcing an immediate armistice with the USSR. The Germans and dissident Hungarian Army officers broadcast a counter-proclamation and Hungarian generals in the field were hesitant to do anything until they could better sort out the confusing situation. It was clear the Nazis would be forced to take the Burgberg if they wanted Horthy.

The planned attack — including infantry, Tiger tanks and the new Goliath mine-exploding tanks — would begin at 0600 on 16 October. Skorzeny sent an ultimatum to the Regent offering him sanctuary in Germany as Hitler's honored guest if he would resign and go peacefully. It was a long shot, he knew, but anything was worth a try at that point. If his plea was rejected, Skor-





**On trial for his life: Skorzeny (center) as Prisoner Number One at Dachau, 1946. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Signal Corps**

zeny had decided on the idea he was going to use at La Maddalena before Mussolini had been moved: a peaceful parade.

At H-hour, Skorzeny formed a column of troops in trucks and tanks with himself in the lead vehicle, a Volkswagen Kubelwagen. It was another bold gamble. He would simply drive up the steep *Wienerstrasse* (Vienna Road), through the government quarter and into the Burgberg. He'd asked a Hungarian officer the night before to remove the mines at the Vienna Gate so that German Embassy personnel could leave and gambled that they hadn't yet been replaced.

Skorzeny told von Fölkersam, "I think Horthy is bluffing. He and the Hungarian troops won't resist. I want to be in the front so I can show the Hungarians that we are not going to fire until fired upon." He told his men, "Do not open fire. Safety catches on. Whatever happens, you must not fire unless an officer tells you to. The Hungarians are not our enemies."

Sure enough, the Hungarian barricades were removed and the troops stood back, since peaceful soldiers did not fire on other peaceful soldiers, especially their recent allies. Up they went until, finally, the column faced a stone barricade directly in front of the citadel itself. Now Skorzeny changed tactics and ordered the lead tank, a Panther, to smash through it with a roar and a clanging crash of steel and stone. Skorzeny followed.

As he leaped off his vehicle, Skorzeny walked straight through the muzzles of six anti-tank guns pointed at his vehicle. Walking inside the citadel at a normal pace, he told a Hungarian officer with a drawn pistol, "Take me to the Commandant." The *Gran Sasso* drama was replayed as Skorzeny told the Major General in command, "I ask that you surrender immediately, otherwise I will order my men to start firing. All resistance is foolish, as I've already taken the Castle. I must know your answer at once."

"I surrender," stammered the shocked officer, and Skorzeny thanked him warmly. At the cost of seven killed and 26 wounded in a fire fight elsewhere on the side of the

Burgberg, he had again won the day.

Now it was Skorzeny's turn to be surprised. The Regent had already left just before the 0600 assault was to begin and had surrendered to a friendly Waffen SS general down in the city. No one had bothered to tell Skorzeny. He and his men had risked their lives for nothing. They had taken the Burgberg needlessly.

On the other hand, Skorzeny was now acting Regent and ruler of Hungary. He had acted with prudence. The Hungarians were beaten, but if Skorzeny was really to accomplish his mission, it was imperative that they not *feel* beaten — much less humiliated. Always the tactful diplomat when the situation called for it, he assembled the Burgberg's Hungarian Army officers into the citadel's Coronation Hall for a short pep talk.

"I would like to remind you that, for centuries, Hungarians have never fought against Austrians. Always, we have been allies. Our concern is a new Europe, but this can only arise if Germany is saved." A joint German-Hungarian funeral for the men killed in the battle was held to further sooth ruffled feelings.

Skorzeny enjoyed the delights of the Burgberg on Hitler's express command — splashing about in the Regent's own bathtub, drinking the Admiral's wine, eating his food and capping it all off by sleeping in the Regency bed. On the 19th, he was formally introduced to the ex-Regent, and accompanied him aboard Hitler's special train, code-named *Amerika*, to a Bavarian castle, his place of exile for the remainder of the war.

While some daring commando missions worked, there were many more that never even got off the ground. One involved using refitted captured American bombers to blast Iraqi oil wells. It never happened. The planes were destroyed in an Allied raid and the Luftwaffe could spare none of its own aircraft to support Skorzeny's scheme.

Another aborted idea was to have a team of his frogmen blow up or block the Suez Canal. It had to be abandoned when Allied security increased and the High Command repeatedly delayed the launch signal. The Nazi High Command also scotched a mission to blow up the Soviet Baku oil center. They delayed permission for the raid until the Balkan airfields from which Skorzeny's men would stage had been overrun by the Russians.

Perhaps the most bizarre of these unfulfilled plans involved the V-1 rocket and the famed Nazi aviatrix Hanna Reitsch, a test pilot who was the only German civilian — male or female — to win the Iron Cross First Class during the war. Skorzeny and Reitsch conceived an idea to fit the infamous buzzbombs with controls allowing pilots to steer to pinpoint targets. The Nazi "kamikaze" pilots would all be volunteers who were willing to die for Führer and Fatherland. Skorzeny got 100 such volunteers but the Luftwaffe refused to provide fuel for the missions.

One mission that did succeed involved a team of Skorzeny's frogmen who blew up the Nymegen Railroad Bridge linking Germany and Holland in 1944. Their mission prevented the bridge from being used by the Allies as an invasion route into the Reich. Of 14 frogmen, two were wounded, four returned unharmed and the other eight were captured.

None of that changed the inevitable. As 1944 ended, the invasion of Germany came closer and closer. Adolf Hitler told his aides to "send for Skorzeny!" On 21 October — just five days after the successful conclusion of the Horthy mission — Skorzeny was back at the Wolf's Lair. Following a ceremony during which Skorzeny was promoted to SS *Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant Colonel) and presented the German Cross in Gold, Hitler got down to business.

"I am now going to give you the most important job of your life. The world thinks Germany is finished, with only the day and hour of the funeral to be appointed. I am going to show how mistaken they are. The corpse will rise and hurl itself in fury at the West. Then we shall see."

Skorzeny was introduced to the Nazi Ardennes offensive, known by the Allies as the Battle of the Bulge for the dent it made into Allied lines. Hitler had decided to strike across the Meuse River in Belgium and capture Antwerp. Three great German armies — which had been clandestinely positioned under Allied noses — would break out of the Ardennes Forest on the Belgian-German frontier from Monschau to Echternach, smash all resistance before them in two days, leap 50 miles across the Meuse, bypass Brussels and reach Antwerp within the first week of the start of the offensive. It was a bold and daring last gasp.

If the plan worked, the Allies would have shattered armies and be faced with an evacuation at Antwerp. Unlike the situation at Dunkirk, the German Navy would be blockading this time. The West would sue for a



separate peace and Hitler would wheel about to face the Soviet colossus with his full strength for the final showdown battle in the east. Or so they hoped.

Skorzeny's own part in all this was crucial. His men were to seize and hold the Meuse River bridges between Léige and Namur until the regular German troops arrived within the first two days to relieve them. To accomplish this new mission, he would raise a full armored brigade of English-speaking troops in American uniforms, with American vehicles and American equipment; all used to sow confusion behind the enemy lines. When Skorzeny protested that any of his men who were captured would be shot as spies, Hitler pointed out that the Allies — particularly the Americans at Aachen, the first German city to fall in the West — had long used just such tactics.

Skorzeny reluctantly accepted the task but was further dismayed when the Führer told him that the attack would begin in under six weeks' time and that — unlike his other previous missions — he himself wouldn't be allowed to accompany his men. "We cannot afford to lose you at this stage," concluded Adolf Hitler.

The mission was almost scrubbed when Field Marshal Keitel sent a message to all German Army units: "Very Secret: To Divisional and Army Commands only. Officers and men who speak English are wanted for a special mission. Volunteers selected will join a new unit under the command of Lt. Col. Skorzeny, to whose headquarters at Friedenthal application should be made." Skorzeny feared that the message would fall into the hands of Allied Intelligence. It did. But the cocky Allies — believing Germany already defeated — ignored it.

Skorzeny plunged ahead with "Operation Greif" (Griffin) and set up a school in which his men had to forget Prussian smartness and heel-clicking in exchange for gum-chewing, slang-usage and other peculiarly American traits. Skorzeny built up his forces — including 70 German tanks camouflaged to look like American Shermans — and looked forward to the day that he could unleash his commandos.

The offensive began on 16 December 1944 and it wasn't long before some of Skorzeny's commandos wearing American uniforms were captured. Before they were shot by American firing squads, the commando prisoners admitted they were part of a hit team tasked with getting the Supreme Commander. That intelligence was quickly passed along and a mere seven jeeps carrying 28 phony "Americans" kept 500,000 real GIs on edge, challenging each other constantly at roadblocks, and confined like to his headquarters where he was surrounded by armed MPs.

Skorzeny had become a beneficiary of Goebbels' propaganda. The legend of Otto Skorzeny dominated Allied thinking during the Battle of the Bulge which gave the Nazis a psychological victory. His men caused great confusion by switching signposts and



**Just another businessman: Engineering consultant Otto Skorzeny walks the streets of Madrid where he lived, until his death, under the protection of Spanish dictator Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Photo: Keystone**

steering U.S. troops in opposite directions but it was essentially wasted effort.

Skorzeny's commandos never reached the Meuse and neither did any other German troops. On 20 December, Skorzeny asked for permission to use his brigade in a conventional armored attack on the Americans opposite him at Ligneville. Waffen SS Gen. Josef "Sepp" Dietrich approved. Disobeying Hitler's order not to go into combat himself, Skorzeny attacked the American 99th Infantry Battalion on the 21st, and later the 120th Infantry. That afternoon, while under U.S. artillery fire, he was wounded again, struck in the forehead by shrapnel. A German Army doctor, after stitching up the wound, ordered Skorzeny to a hospital in the rear, but the burly SS commando just grinned, and returned to the front to rejoin his men.

By the end of December Skorzeny knew that the battle was lost. He returned to Germany to face Hitler with his first major failure in action. Hitler's FHQ was now in the Eagle's Eyrie, a bunker near the Bad Nauheim castle of Ziegenberg on the frontier. The Führer, under the influence of his physician's drugs himself at this point, was euphoric, and merely concerned about Skorzeny's wound. No mention was made of failure, nor of the Führer's disobeyed orders. After a secret conference lasting hours, Skorzeny — Nazi Germany's classic commando — left to begin a shift in his career toward more conventional soldiering.

His last active fighting role in the war began with a telephone call on 30 January

from Himmler. He'd just been named to command Army Group Vistula and Himmler ordered Skorzeny to take his men to the town of Schwedt on the Oder River outside Berlin. The commandos were to stage a last-ditch resistance to the final Russian offensive hurtling toward the Reich capital like an express train.

Skorzeny took a parachute battalion and four companies of special troops made up of many European nationalities who had enlisted to fight under the Germans against the feared Russians. At this "Schwedt Bridgehead," Skorzeny eventually built up a division-sized formation by waylaying retreating German Army regulars and local reserve forces.

Between February-March 1945, Skorzeny's men fought a tenacious holding action. At Königsberg (King's Mountain), Skorzeny turned ruthless, hanging Nazi Party officials who deserted their posts. The activity made him an enemy of party chief Martin Bormann, who disliked seeing his minions killed. Still, Skorzeny remained a popular figure. Gen. Jodl ordered Skorzeny to leave his men behind at Schwedt and return to FHQ, which was now in the underground Führerbunker beneath the shattered Berlin Reich Chancellery building.

Prior to this last meeting between the Führer and Skorzeny, Hitler had briefly considered sending his commando chief to beef up the Siegfried Line defenses guarding the Fatherland's Western approaches. Instead, on 7 March 1945, Jodl ordered Skorzeny's frogmen to blow up the Ludendorff railroad bridge at Remagen in an attempt to once again prevent the Allies from crossing the Rhine into Germany.

Swimming in freezing water, the commandos failed to blow up the bridge but it collapsed after the establishment of an Allied bridgehead on the Rhine's German side. They swam upstream to destroy a U.S. Army pontoon bridge but were spotted by the beams of the Allies' top-secret CDL (Canal Defense Lights). Two men drowned and the rest were captured. Skorzeny himself helped evacuate other wounded men.

And now, late in March 1945, Skorzeny conferred with Adolf Hitler for the last time.

"Skorzeny, I haven't yet thanked you for your stand on the Oder. Day after day it was the one bright spot in my reports. I have awarded you the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross and I mean to hand them to you myself. Then you can give me a full account. For the future, I have other work for you." They were interrupted and the aging dictator shuffled off, never to see Otto Skorzeny again.

As April 1945 approached, Skorzeny's name was still magic among Nazi Germany's enemies and Hitler meant to take advantage of this. Skorzeny's last assignment was to proceed to Bavaria in southern Germany to organize the last stand of diehard Nazis in the fabled — but non-existent — "Alpine Redoubt." Allied In-

*Continued on page 93*

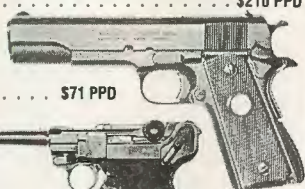


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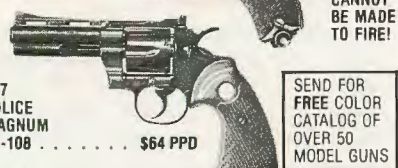
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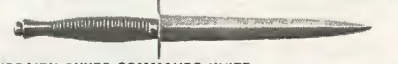
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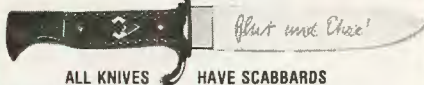
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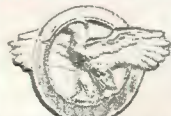


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**BG-15**

Continued from page 30

being bombarded by a British two-inch mortar, a weapon he remembered fondly from his time training with the SAS in the 1960s. The grenade itself is probably similar in effect to its U.S. counterpart, weighing about .2 kilogram with about a five-meter lethal radius against exposed troops. Shrapnel wounds will be produced anywhere within the round's 15-20-meter bursting radius. The round is unpainted except for standard Soviet ordnance stencils. It is fitted with a point-detonating fuse.

Since there were only two rounds of BG-15 ammo available — both needed for test-firings — we passed on the opportunity to chunk one downrange. It's difficult to determine the grenadier's basic unit of fire for the BG-15 but there's little doubt he could handle an extended patrol without running out of rounds. The light weight of the ammo and the launcher — I estimate it weighs about one kilogram — indicates a rifleman armed with the BG-15 could carry enough ammo in his haversack for a day of steady contact.

The grenade launcher has been in use for more than two years in Afghanistan. Squads of eight to 10 infantrymen are frequently equipped with one or two. It is regularly used to engage Afghans by direct fire and has been effective in breaching standard cover. Because it is impossible to dig in on rocky crests, the Afghans build breastworks of stones called *sangars*. A burst of Kalashnikov fire will splatter across a *sangar*, but a 40mm grenade may demolish it. In a war where the chief Afghan tactic is the ambush, the 40mm grenade also apparently makes a good contact breaker.

The Soviet infantry has become a much more capable force in the course of the Afghanistan War. Before that, the Soviets had not considered what would be needed for extended, dismounted operations when their infantry cannot fight as part of a combined-arms, mechanized force with tanks and armored vehicles in direct support. Experience in Afghanistan has changed that. The appearance of BG-15 grenade launchers, as well as tactical shifts, is evidence of the Soviet realization that they need more infantry firepower to fight this sort of war.

Other evidence can be found in the appearance of the RPG-18s, a Soviet copy of the U.S. M76 LAW anti-tank weapon. Afghans report RPG-18s are being carried by Soviet troopers in virtually all engagements these days. Like U.S. infantry in Vietnam and British troops in the Falklands, the Soviets have found a LAW-type weapon valuable for shifting snipers or holing houses and bunkers. One round will blow



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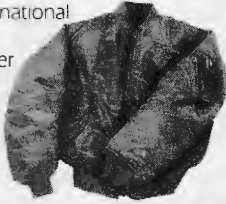
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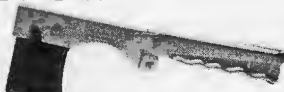
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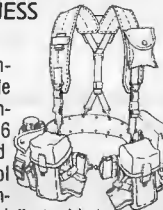
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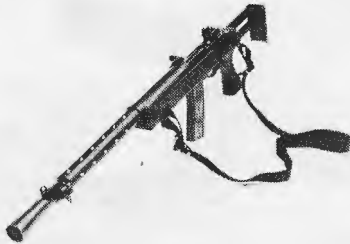
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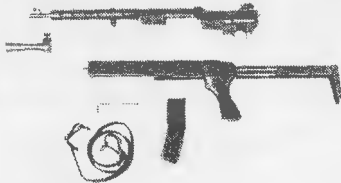


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the components of a *sangar* into the next province. Soviet troops are also carrying HE rounds for the RPG-7 to be used in the infantry support role where tanks are absent. At company level, the AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher continues to take Afghan lives.

The Soviets have not forgotten the importance of ballistic missiles or tank divisions but from their experiences in Afghanistan they are coming to realize it is the man on the ground fondling the Kalashnikov and BG-15 that will prop up the world's last great military empire, gained by conquest and maintained by fear.

While we were the first Westerners to handle the BG-15 grenade launcher in the field, the Afghans told us that some had already been taken out of the country. More than one example is already in the hands of more than one friendly nation. It's reassuring to know that the professionals can still best amateurs in technical intelligence — at least some of the time.

There's an interesting story to go with that but it's better to let the KGB sweat over who has their weaponry and how it was obtained. Even the most heavily armed and paranoid forces have dangerous enemies. I'm proud to be one of those enemies and help defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan any way I can.

You can do it too. A donation to *Soldier of Fortune's* Afghan Freedom Fighter Fund (P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306) will not only put you on the opposite side from the KGB and their friends, but it will gain you the gratitude of my mujahideen friends who — like Safi, Hassan and the graybeards from Kunar — shook our hands, exchanged salaams, and headed over the next mountain toward home — or death at the hands of the Soviet invaders. ✕

## GUN JAMS

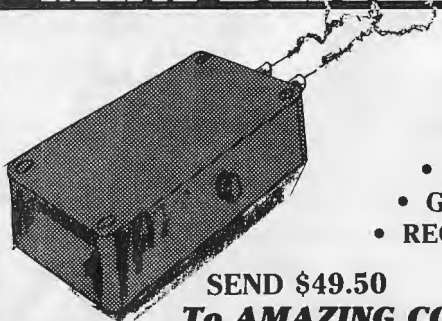
*Continued from page 63*

the bases will jam tight into the chambers.

One last stoppage which bears mentioning is the magazine which fails to drop free of the pistol when the magazine release is pressed, preventing the shooter from reloading. This is generally caused by an oversized magazine, or by a round remaining in the magazine, nosing forward against the feed ramp to bind the box in place. If the shooter is properly trained in reloading technique, he will already have the fresh magazine in his weak hand approaching the pistol when the used magazine's failure to drop free becomes apparent. Do *not* stand there shaking the pistol. It won't work.

Simply hook the little finger of the weak hand on the forward lip of the floorplate of the stuck magazine and strip it out of the pistol. If more force is needed than you can

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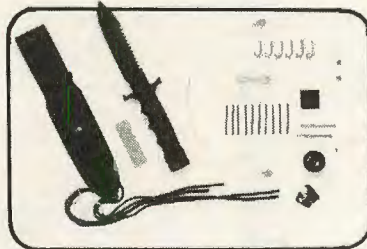
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apply with your finger (that's rare), hook the floorplate lip on a solid object: your belt, the edge of your boot, etc. Note that this otherwise-minor stoppage becomes a major problem if the design of the weapon or magazine, or the shooter's ill-advised choice of custom grips for his handgun, prevents a finger-hold from being obtained on the base of a hung magazine.

Two final points: *reliability* is the single most important quality of any weapon. As good as you may become at clearing stoppages, if your weapon malfunctions with the ammunition you carry in it more often than "once in a blue moon," you'd better get the problem straightened out before it straightens you out.

And bear in mind the instructions given to the dumb Viking: "Rape and pillage first, then burn the village." Pay attention to proper sequence in clearance procedures. A weapon stoppage is a distracting occurrence and especially distressing when it occurs at a critical moment. It's not the end of the world if you've been well-trained. Once you have cleared the stoppage, forget it and concentrate on the problem at hand: sight alignment and trigger-squeeze. ✕

## BUSH BOBBIES

*Continued from page 37*

side the house, he spied a fourth terrorist and fired on him. He also took a fifth terrorist under fire and chased them all into the bush. Field reservist de Robillard single-handedly drove off the attack and saved the family inside the house he was protecting.

The Police Reserve Air Wing was manned by pilots and observers who owned their own aircraft and made them available for use on operational duties. There were both male and female police reservists flying in the operational area. Similarly, the Marine Division was composed of reservists who made their privately owned boats available for operational duties on Lake Kariba. They supplemented the efforts of the Army's Rhodesian Corps of Engineers Boat Squadron and the gunboats of the BSAP regulars. The larger craft were fitted with radar in addition to mortars and guns ranging up to 40mm. In that configuration they were known as mother ships. These craft were able to direct and provide fire support for smaller striker boats (armed with .303-inch MGs taken from WWII aircraft) to intercept water craft attempting to land Zambian-based terrorists on the Rhodesian side of the lake.

One Marine Division escapade involved regulars and reservists on a river patrol in 1976. Section Officer Thomas Matthews, Patrol Officer Duncan Paul, and Field Reservist Walter Bredenkamp were in one of the two police launches carrying out a patrol on the Zambezi River on 17 September 1976.

Both launches came under intense small-

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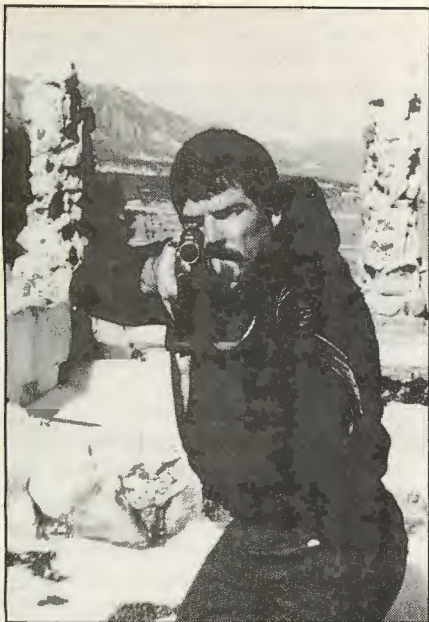
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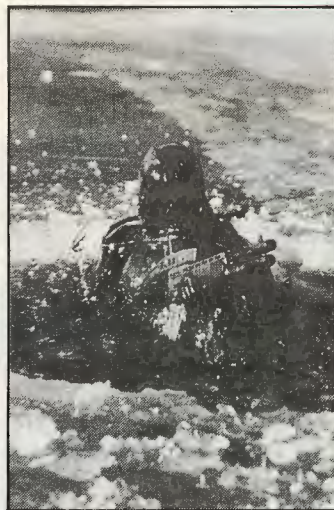
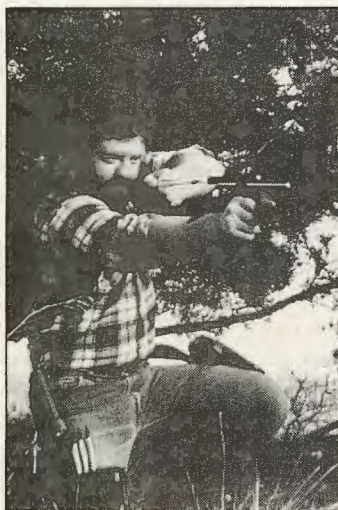


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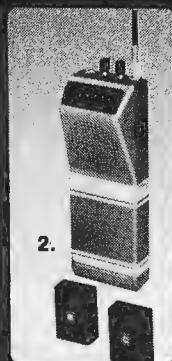
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arms and rocket fire from the Zambian side of the river, resulting in the second launch being hit, with one of the crew being killed and the other two wounded. The damaged launch ran aground at the base of a cliff on the Rhodesian bank, and as the fire was being directed at it Section Officer Matthews pulled into the bank 200 meters away. He and two of his crew went to the aid of the stricken boat, through intense incoming fire, while the remaining member provided cover. Section Officer Matthews carried out one of the wounded policemen leaving two of his crew to protect the other wounded policeman.

After carrying the wounded man back to base, Matthews volunteered to return with reinforcements and successfully carried out a second Casevac in the dark. He was awarded the Police Decoration for Gallantry.

The "A" reserve were mostly past-service regular policemen and women who served in the police stations to release regulars from police work for operational duties.

Specialists served in all parts of the country, wherever they might be needed to repair vehicles or radio equipment or weapons, and to build defensive positions for police camps in the operational area. Gokwe looked like Dien Bien Phu after the second terrorist attempt to over-run that police camp. And the police camp at Vila Salazar looked more like Khe Sanh once the daily exchanges started with FRELIMO (Army of Mozambique) on the other side of our south-east border.

We had weapons, tactics and organization for the bush, but urban terrorism required a different response from that supplied by PATU. Urban Emergency Units (UEU) were introduced experimentally in Bulawayo in 1975 and, since they proved successful, also in Salisbury, Gwelo and Umtali in 1976. Much like U.S. SWAT teams, the BSAP UEUs were manned by members of the regular force who were specially trained to respond to urban terrorism, hostage situations, aircraft hijackings and the entire range of urban criminal activity.

Each UEU consisted of two or more teams of nine men, and a woman patrol officer who was responsible for the search and guarding of female prisoners. Teams were as lightly equipped as possible and were armed from their own resources as the situation dictated.

I was lucky enough to see the Gwelo UEU in action in the middle of 1977, and picked up some of the finer points of their operation. Because they were primarily concerned with fighting in a built-up area, they had detailed plans of the African township and other residential areas of Gwelo. They always had house plans available before they tried an entry into a terrorist-held building. Also, because of the war-footing on which they were able to operate, they were not restrained by the normal police principle of "minimum force."

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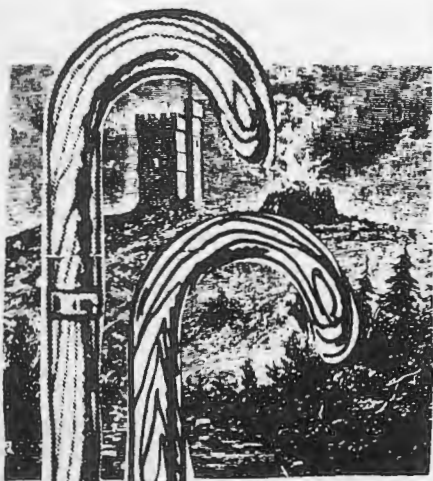
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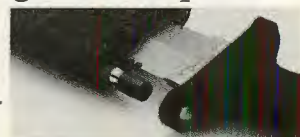
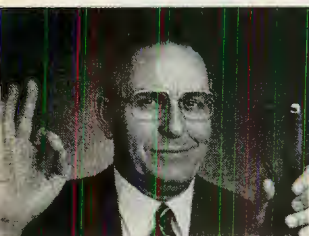
Other units of the BSAP that did sterling work in the bush were: Dog Section (tracking), the Special Investigation Sections (SIS were the BSAP's LRRPs for recon missions in the Tribal Trust Lands of Rhodesia), and Support Unit (the largest *regular* infantry regiment in Rhodesia. They were definitely Rhodesia's best at extended patrolling and internal clandestine work.

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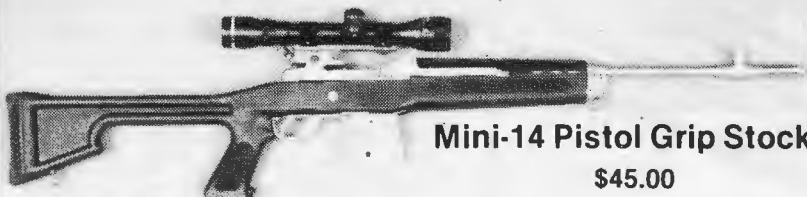
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## PLEIKU PUNCH-UP

Continued from page 69

body and tried to reach the dozer tank. We found out the hard way that an NVA machine-gunner still had it under observation. It didn't appear badly damaged. Most of the smoke was coming from external supplies and sponson gear. Crawling out of there we marked the MG position for future attention and got back to the ammo point.

Second platoon solved our tank-retrieval problem. They came on the scene like a herd of elephants. Jolting down an approach road at 35 mph, they pulled up parallel with the enemy gun positions and just rolled through, crushing everything in sight beneath their tracks. The way was clear to retrieve the dozer tank.

At 1600 SFC Taylor came in to the re-arm area at the controls of the vehicle. He'd silenced the pesky MG with cannon fire, rounded up the remaining crewmen, driven his own tank up behind the dozer vehicle, jumped aboard and drove off with it. The turret was a bloody mess. A rocket had hit one of the armored viewing ports and the spray of armor glass had sheared off the commander's skull level with his ears. I helped haul the body out and we added him to a growing line of blanket-draped bodies at one side of the compound.

The battalion CO, Colonel Williams, who was up in a chopper, saw us as we came

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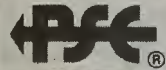
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in and got on the lieutenant's case over the radio.

"Choice Shopper 3-6, this is Big 6, there's three of your tankers running around loose down there. Get them rounded up before they get killed."

Somelik appeared a bit surprised and replied, "From up there, how can you tell that they're tankers?"

The colonel's reply was short and precise: "Do you know anyone else that would be wearing cut-off fatigues, jungle boots and bandoliers, instead of shirts?"

"No sir."

"Well then, round up those three savages and put them back in their cans."

With 3rd Platoon loaded up by 1430, the 2nd Platoon was trickling back for more shells and a breather. The situation was looking much brighter in Pleiku but I was upset about losing the dozer tank. Hell, that could have been my command. After this fight they'd be needing some new TCs. The tank had sustained some hull damage also and was leaking fuel and transmission fluid. Lt. Somelik interrupted my reverie.

"You better get the trucks outta here, Sarge. There's likely to be mortar and rocket fire until we dig out their artillery section."

"Yessir. This dozer's pretty well fucked up though."

"Well, take it with you. If it can be fixed, it's yours. Captain Allen will confirm the post. Anyhow, you need to be out of base before you get busted for something."

"Yessir!" It wasn't the best way to get command of a tank but I wasn't going to argue. Armor had saved Pleiku and I had a piece of the action at last. ✕

## WHEN SHADOWS SHOOT BACK

*Continued from page 59*

for sure. That night our unit was ordered off the hill along with all the radio gear. We loaded up and moved down to the *cuartel* where 81mm mortars had been registered onto our previous position. Everyone was still expecting action.

Inside the *cuartel* at the southern base of the hill I set to work preparing a surprise for the Gs. I'd discovered something interesting in the motor pool the week before and it would make a nice welcome mat for anyone approaching the camp with evil intent. The seven-ton object of my attention began service as an M114 Command and Reconnaissance Carrier. Developed by the Allison Division of General Motors, the M114 was a less-than-successful attempt to replace soft-skinned vehicles like the jeep with an armored vehicle that was lighter, smaller and less expensive than the M113 APC. Production commenced in 1962 by the Food and Machinery Corporation in California. It was deployed in Vietnam during 1965-66, but withdrawn after a produc-

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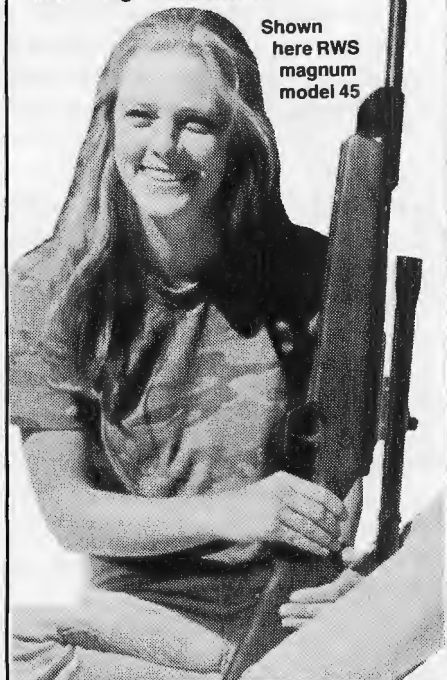
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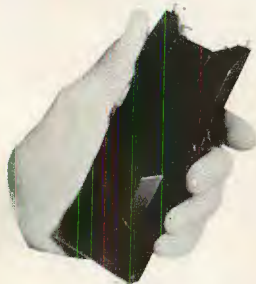


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tion run of no more than 3,000. Originally armed with a .50-cal. M2 HB Browning machine gun, later versions carried the 20mm Hispano Suiza cannon. It had a Chevrolet 90-degree V-8 engine and GMC Hydromatic transmission.

About five years ago, 25 of these tracked vehicles were sent to El Salvador. The armor plate, cupolas and armaments were stripped off and the chassis and engines shipped as "agricultural tractors" to the Cavalry Regiment. An enterprising officer in the Maestranza, Major Marengo, proceeded to rebuild them in several different configurations. A few are in service with the Air Force of El Salvador (See "Perimeter Defense at Ilopango Airport," SOF, September 1983). Those versions mount three Yugoslav 20mm M-55 anti-aircraft guns. At least one other M114 found its way up to this *cuartel*. I intended to take advantage of that.

This diesel-engine model was equipped with new armor plate and two electrically driven rear cupolas. Each mounted a .50 cal. M2 Browning aircraft machine gun with spade grips. To compensate for the higher rate of fire and consequent muzzle climb on the unconstrained mount, a peculiar — but quite effective — muzzle brake had been installed. Two of these M2 aircraft guns are also mounted in the front hull, but the left gun is a dummy as the space behind the hull in this area is occupied by the driver. The two cupola guns are fed from ammo cans mounted outside the turret.

All three working guns needed maintenance, headspacing and timing adjustments. This was accomplished in short order with the assistance of the Ma Deuce crew from the fire-support team. We were ready but the guerrillas failed to show again that night. The day's only action proved to be a grenade accident in the barracks which wounded eight men.

We trudged back up to the 'A' camp which had been reoccupied after the initial guerrilla threat. Training and defensive preparations were continuing. After two more days of training and weapons instruction, I left for San Salvador. One of Melara's training cadre, a corporal, came down from the hill to say goodbye. We were *camarada de combate*. The Gs declared a weekend moratorium on highway traffic so we drove at 80 mph with my Galil set on full-auto. We sailed through without a problem. Once more I had come close to the wire without crossing or getting snagged on the barbs of combat.

The war continues. Our little perimeter on the hill was but a fragment of the entire spectrum of the turbulent situation in El Salvador. The tides of a vicious guerrilla war ebb and flow. Despite some very significant efforts from inside and outside the country, the government forces have not been able to wipe out the communist insurgents. And when the government is not clearly winning the war, it's losing. ☒



## INSIDE NICARAGUA

Continued from page 45

Bloc arms and ammunition — plus the delivery of deadly Russian Mi-24 helicopter gunships and a bid to get jet fighters — are only the most obvious indications that Sandinista words and actions vary greatly.

Another indication of their duplicity is the recent arrival in Nicaragua of scores of young guerrillas — terrorists is a better description — on loan from such groups as the Palestine Liberation Organization and Italy's Red Brigade. Other left-wing recruits have come to Nicaragua from Libya and Brazil.

The most telling indication of Sandinista intentions may be the tone of an internal memorandum circulated in Nicaragua's Ministry of Interior. In an attempt to cloak Nicaragua's November 1984 elections in as much apparent legitimacy as possible, the memo clearly spells out the necessity for the government to control the flow of information to the public.

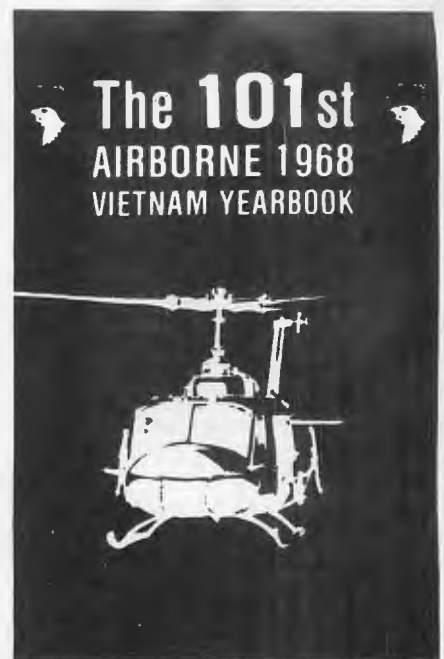
The 17-page document, which was spirited out of the country by a high-level Nicaraguan government source, outlines a two-pronged propaganda campaign. One mission was to promote the appearance to outsiders that press censorship in Nicaragua was being lifted, while a

second goal was to actually *tighten* control of local press organs.

The aim set forth in the memo was to enhance the public perception of legitimacy for the Supreme Electoral Council, the bureaucracy set up by the Sandinistas to oversee their elections, while effectively stifling more conservative political opponents who had genuine complaints about the regime's weaknesses and inequities. The latter campaign element was accomplished, according to the memo, through "a strategy of rumors and gossip" against — among others specifically named — Arturo Cruz. A former member of the Sandinista regime, Cruz became one of its biggest critics and the Sandinistas' strongest political opponent.

The Marxist government of Nicaragua — bolstered by the expert propaganda experience of its political masters in Moscow and Havana — clearly understands that if "the truth shall set you free," then lies help enslave you.

Such inside information is not necessary to understand the intentions of the Managua regime using the strength of its Popular Sandinista Army (EPS). The EPS has grown from a guerrilla army of about 5,000 in 1979 — armed primarily with light-infantry weapons — to 62,000 regular troops equipped with some of the most sophisticated weapons systems the Soviet arsenal has to offer. These in-



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clude as many as a dozen Mi-24s, one of the world's deadliest attack helicopters. Counting the militia the government has called to arms — much to the detriment of the coffee and cotton crops — Nicaragua's military force now numbers more than 130,000. The communist government publicly announced in 1981 a goal of 200,000 in militia troops *alone*. Mexico, which has a population 25 times greater than that of Nicaragua, has a standing army only twice the size of that already existing under Managua's government.

Backing this huge war machine are thousands of military advisers from Cuba, Bulgaria, Russia, Libya and East Germany.

Besides arms, ammunition and equipment, the Soviets are financing numerous large-scale military construction projects, including an estimated \$70 million for almost 40 new army facilities. A 10,000-foot runway the Cubans and Russians are building at Punta Huete will be the largest in Central America when completed. It will provide the Soviets with a base from which they could launch long-range reconnaissance flights aimed at both U.S. coastlines.

Opposing this massive communist military force are only 25,000 poorly equipped resistance fighters divided into two major and two lesser groups.

There is no central command, no coordinated strategy and virtually no air assets other than a few small fixed-wing aircraft. Since U.S. government aid was cut off in May 1984, ammunition and weapons supplies for old troops and new recruits have run critically short. A few other nations, most notably Israel and Argentina, have picked up some of the slack. Private groups and individuals have also made significant contributions, but these have only enabled the freedom fighters to hang on to a bare-minimum status quo.

Of the approximately 25,000 men and women fighting the Sandinista government, most — about 16,000 — belong to the Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN.) The FDN operates in a wide theater of the Nicaraguan Segovias, extensively in the northern departments of Madriz, Nueva Segovia, Jinotega and Esteli. The FDN's field commander is Colonel Enrique Bermudez, a military engineer who graduated from the Nicaraguan Military Academy in 1952.

The Sandinistas have exploited heavily early criticism of the FDN that its ranks are controlled by former high-ranking members of Somoza's National Guard. While old Nicaraguan guardsmen did contribute greatly to the nucleus that originated the FDN, it was simply because they were the only available men

with military experience. Despite charges that Col. Bermudez is an old Somoza sympathizer, facts indicate otherwise.

Bermudez was serving as Nicaragua's military attaché in Washington for over five years before Somoza was overthrown. Anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of Latin American political affairs knows that Washington assignments are handed out to those the government wishes to get out of the way, *not* to members of the inner circle.

As the FDN now stands, only 12 of its 53 regional commanders are former members of the National Guard, chosen for their military acumen, *not* their wish to restore a Somoza-style government in their homeland. The FDN's total troop strength is now approximately one-percent former guardsmen, and this figure shrinks steadily as more and more refugees stream into camps to join in the fight against communist tyranny. It is now estimated by U.S. government and refugee-relief sources that more than 120,000 Nicaraguans have been driven into exile since the Sandinistas betrayed the revolution in 1979.

While the FDN is the main resistance force in northern Nicaragua, the primary group on the southern front is the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE.) Although this was once a very strong guerrilla army of more than 10,000, it

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has fallen into disarray due mainly to the tactical and strategic incompetence of Eden Pastora, whose personal charisma and political shrewdness in no way compensate for shortcomings as a military leader. A splinter group, calling itself Reformed ARDE, has broken ranks with Pastora loyalists, but it remains to be seen if either group will re-emerge as a viable fighting force.

The other two resistance movements are comprised of Indian refugees driven out of Nicaragua by the Sandinistas' massive relocation program, reminiscent of Stalin's Russia. The MISURA operate on the northern front, composed of members of the Miskito, Suma and Rama tribes. They suffer from an acute lack of even the bare essentials for effective operations and the absence of their leader, Steadman Fagoth Muller, who was deported by Honduras. On the southern front is MISURATA, made up of refugees from similar Indian groups led by Brooklyn Rivera. They have the same logistical and organizational problems.

If lack of material support is the biggest external threat faced by the resistance fighters after the Sandinista soldiers, the biggest internal problem — at least on the southern front — is factional dissent. Many MISURATA troops are disenchanted with Rivera as a leader and Pastora's men are very

demoralized. While the troops in Reformed ARDE seemed to have very high morale and have territory staked out inside Nicaragua, a strong and capable field commander has yet to emerge and they must prove themselves in battle.

The factional dissent in the south detrimentally affects the FDN indirectly because it hurts the chances of success for a unified command of all resistance movements. The framework for such an effort has been set up by representatives of the various groups. But the Nicaraguan Union of Reconciliation (UNIR) must still prove in practice the cooperation set forth on paper.

Once this first requirement for success is accomplished, the resistance movement must take and hold a significant piece of Nicaraguan real estate and set up a provisional government with appropriately selected political representatives. This second condition will lead naturally to the third prerequisite for victory, a credibility that will produce the recognition of and open support by the international community which is so badly needed. Otherwise, the civil war will drag on as a protracted, bloody struggle in which neither side can win a clear-cut victory.

— Dr. José Wenceslao Mayorga

## OTTO SKORZENY

Continued from page 75

telligence feared that Skorzeny and his dreaded "Werewolf" troops, secure in the rugged German Alps, could prolong the war by hit-and-run guerrilla actions for years.

The Allies issued wanted posters on Skorzeny. Labeled above his picture was the word "spy," and, to the two sides, "saboteur" and "assassin." Underneath, it said, "This man is extremely clever and very dangerous. He may be in American or British uniform or civilian clothes. He usually wears a signet ring on third finger of left hand. Any information concerning this man should be furnished to the nearest G-2 [Intelligence] office without delay."

Skorzeny's whereabouts during the next month of 1945 are vague and many rumors abound about his activities during the final days of the war. One popular story indicates he secretly flew Hitler out of burning Berlin to a neutral country before the Führer's officially accepted death on 30 April 1945. The truth appears to be that both Skorzeny and Radl remained in the Alpine Redoubt until the end.

When Skorzeny learned of Germany's unconditional surrender on 8 May, a Luftwaffe officer offered to fly him to safety in neutral Spain but Skorzeny decided to see personally to the surrender of his men. He

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made several attempts to turn himself in by writing letters to the Allies. They were all rejected as fakes. The Allies continued to search for "the most dangerous man in Europe."

On 18 May, tired of waiting for an answer to his letters, Skorzeny, Radl and two other officers — armed and in SS combat uniforms — left the mountains to find the Americans themselves. A desk sergeant at a U.S. Army depot didn't know who Skorzeny was but he provided a jeep with a driver to take the group to Salzburg. The driver knew of the infamous Nazi commando. He stopped and bought them a bottle of wine along the way. "If you're Skorzeny, you'd better take a drink," he told the German officer. "Tonight you'll hang."

The surrendered Nazis were shuttled from town to town — still fully armed — until it finally dawned on Allied Intelligence that they really had SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny in their grasp. While being questioned at a villa by U.S. officers, windows and doors were flung open on all sides and Skorzeny found himself covered by machine guns. At last he was being taken seriously. He was taken away, hands manacled behind him with a pistol at his heart, to face the war crimes tribunals.

During the Nuremberg Trials held after the war, Skorzeny became reacquainted with his old commanders but he wasn't tried there. It wasn't until the Dachau Trials that Skorzeny was put on the stand. He was

accused of using poison bullets, of conspiring to kill Eisenhower and of allowing his troops to fight in U.S. uniforms. His American defense attorneys (whom he selected over German counsel) were able to have the first two charges dropped but the third one stuck. When it looked like Skorzeny might hang over the uniform issue, a surprising defense witness stepped forward to save him.

British RAF Wing Commander Forrest Yeo-Thomas, known as the "White Rabbit" in the wartime French underground, testified that Allied commandos often wore German uniforms during operations. The most serious and final charge against Skorzeny was dismissed. As Yeo-Thomas left the witness stand, Skorzeny and his fellow defendants stood in silent tribute to a gallant commando.

The post-war German democratic administration wanted him for "de-Nazification" proceedings so Skorzeny was moved from Allied captivity to a German camp. He had been in captivity for more than three years, longer than his entire commando career. On 27 July 1948, Skorzeny decided to escape by simply stowing away in the trunk of a car and going out the front gate.

He changed clothes in a nearby woods, took a train to Stuttgart and settled in Berchtesgaden. The U.S. quietly overlooked Skorzeny's escape leaving him free to travel with his wife in the country for which he had fought so hard.

In October 1949, the Skorzenys made the mistake of going to Paris where they were photographed while strolling down the Champs Elyssée. The picture was published in the French newspapers and the communists rioted. The name Skorzeny would remain controversial until the end of his life.

The postwar press — and at least one of his three major biographers — accused him of organizing the neo-Nazi escape and terrorist networks *Die Spinne* (The Spider) and *ODESSA*. He was also rumored to be involved during 1948-50 in all manner of clandestine activities on behalf of foreign governments, particularly as a quasi-U.S. operative in the Cold War struggle.

The Cold War practically — if not politically and officially — was the salvation of many ex-Nazis. They turned up as military advisers in the 1950s and '60s to the armies of Egypt, Argentina and Spain where an estimated 16,000 German Nazis were living in Madrid alone by 1950.

Skorzeny settled there — more or less permanently — in 1952 and stayed for 23 years. He resumed his professional career as an engineering and business consultant and served as an unofficial adviser to Egyptian King Farouk and his successor, President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Spanish Generalissimo Francisco Franco and the regime of Colonel Juan Peron and his wife Evita in Argentina. He was executor and beneficiary of numerous international business deals, many of them involving highly lucrative arms sales.

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The rumors about Skorzeny's behind-the-scenes political schemes grew wilder and wilder with each passing year: a plot to assassinate French President Charles de Gaulle, setting up Nazi-style rocket bases in Egypt, training the early cadres of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), smuggling Adolf Eichmann and the notorious Nazi Dr. Josef Mengele to safety and many more tales. He was also supposed to be involved in a plan to abduct the Sultan of Morocco, and still another mission to send commandos to seize the Suez Canal during the 1956 crisis.

In later years, he was accused of plotting to kill Cuban dictator Fidel Castro and German Nazi-hunter Beate Klarsfeld. In a final, though unsuccessful, attempt to put an end to all such rumors, Skorzeny published his memoirs in 1950, through the E.P. Dutton Company, entitled *Skorzeny's Secret Missions*.

In 1972, University of Maryland professor Charles Whiting published *Skorzeny*, a largely pictorial volume which is part of Ballantine Books series *Illustrated History of the Violent Century*. Skorzeny himself wrote the introduction.

"I want to repeat what I have often said, that only by the help of all my subordinates during the war, by their complete loyalty to me, their high sense of duty right to the end of the war and their unbelievable bravery in following me and strictly fulfilling my orders, was it possible for me to succeed in my different war actions.

"I will always keep alive the memory and reverence for all my soldiers, officers and staff officers who gave their lives in complete fulfillment of their highest duty for our homeland. All the honors I received were earned by all of us — to the last and youngest soldier of our units."

In 1970, a cancerous tumor was located on his spine and, guarded by his old Friedenthal veterans, Skorzeny had it removed at Hamburg's University Clinic. Two tumors were found and he left the operation paralyzed from the waist down. Told he would never walk again, Skorzeny underwent physical therapy and proved his doctors wrong.

It didn't help. The cancer remained in his body and spread. His physical therapist, former SS commando Alois Wirmer, stated, "As close as I was to him, he never indicated in any way that he had cancer. I thought the tumors were benign, that he was recovering. When he had a bad spell, he told me he had a cold or the flu or indigestion. I never thought otherwise."

Otto Skorzeny died in Madrid a month after his 67th birthday on 7 July 1975. He was cremated and his ashes flown to Vienna for burial in the family plot.

What is Otto Skorzeny's true place in history? He was much more than just a famous soldier. Skorzeny was the most daring and renowned proponent of a new form of warfare that knows no bounds and has few — if any — rules. His style of combat will have a place in modern warfare as long

as brushfires rage throughout the Third World. ✕

## FULL AUTO

*Continued from page 16*

"wire" stock and contains its spring-loaded release latches. Patterned after that of the M3 "grease gun," the stock is surprisingly sturdy and can be adjusted to three different lengths. The very latest models will not require the release latches to be depressed to withdraw to the first position of extension.

With the stock completely retracted the overall length of the MPi69 is only 18.3 inches. This is about two inches shorter than the Heckler & Koch MP5A3 and two inches longer than the Beretta Model 12S. At 6.5 pounds the MPi69 weighs about as much as the Beretta Model 12S and is more than one pound lighter than the UZI (7.7 pounds), but about one pound heavier than the H&K MP5A3 (5.6 pounds).

The 9mm Parabellum six-groove barrel has a right-hand twist of one turn in 10 inches. High-quality steel barrel stock is cold hammer-forged on a rifling mandrel developed by GFM of Steyr, Austria. This process is less expensive than button rifling and produces sharper groove cuts.

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The sights guiding projectiles down this barrel are what you would expect of a current generation submachine gun. The plastic rear sight offers two flip-type apertures for 100 and 200 meters protected by large steel ears. The front-post sight, also guarded by protective ears, is offset and adjustable for windage and elevation zero. Elevation changes without a corresponding change in horizontal deflection must be in complete turn (360 degrees) increments of the post. A very German-looking tool is available for this purpose.

The lower-receiver/pistol-grip/trigger-housing assembly is fabricated from a fiber-reinforced polycarbonate called Macrolon. Corrosion-free, salt-water-resistant, shockproof, heat-resistant and unbelievably lightweight, Macrolon is used by Steiner for their binocular housings. This space-age material exhibits less temperature expansion than metal.

The cross-bolt selector/safety is housed in the lower receiver above and to the rear of the trigger. Pushed all the way to the right, it will block the trigger (not the bolt) completely. This is the Safe position ("S"). Placed in the middle position the cross-bolt permits semiautomatic fire only. Pushed completely to the left into the Fire position ("F"), the cross-bolt releases all constraint on the trigger and allows it to be

pulled rearward to its fullest extent. This will produce full-auto fire.

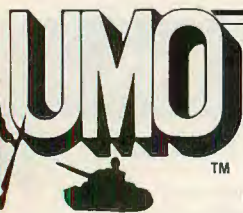
When placed in the "F" position semiautomatic or burst fire is controlled by pressure on the trigger. A short pull will yield a single shot only. Pulling the trigger completely to the rear will turn on the bullet hose. The trigger is center-pivoted and its upper extension, with a cross-bar on the end, rides between the sear's two prongs. Pressure from the cocked bolt presses the sear forward and the trigger's cross-bar sits on the end of the sear between its raised prongs.

When the trigger is pulled back only about ½-inch for semiautomatic fire, the sear is depressed and the bolt flies forward. On its return the bolt drives the sear prongs rearward. They move back under the trigger's cross-bar and rise to block the bolt's forward travel. In full-auto fire the trigger is pulled back completely and the cross-bar pushes the sear down and holds it completely clear of the bolt until the trigger is released. Brilliant. Best of all, the trigger-pull weight on both my MPi69 and MPi81 submachine guns is a very consistent and crisp 4.5 pounds. I have never fired any submachine gun with a better trigger.

The MPi69 cocking system is really strange. The retracting bar is a sheet-metal stamping that rides in a slot on the receiver's left side. The front sling swivel is attached to a ring on this bar. Pulling back on the sling will cock the bolt. A really macho stud is supposed to do this with only his shooting hand while the sling is over the shoulder. But, both hands are required of uncoordinated klutzes like myself since the swivel ring must first be rotated away from the receiver so that it clears the front sight's left protective ear before it can be moved to the rear. This deliberate motion is designed to prevent inadvertent cocking. Devilishly clever and typically Teutonic.

So much so that in 1981 when the MPi81 was introduced the front sling swivel was moved to the barrel nut. A conventional hook-shaped plastic retracting handle is attached to the cocking bar. The MPi69/81 cocking bar is spring-loaded and returns to its forward position. It is non-reciprocating.

Disassembly is quite simple and takes but a few seconds. Withdraw the magazine and make certain there is no round in the chamber. With the bolt forward, depress the button on the end of the recoil spring's guide rod and pivot the receiver's end cap upward. Withdraw the entire bolt/recoil-spring assembly. Pull the barrel nut's spring-loaded locking latch (located to the right of the front-sight unit) rearward and while holding it back, spin off the barrel nut. Withdraw the barrel. Extend the shoulder stock. Slap the Mac-



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olon lower receiver smartly with the palm of the hand on the rear of the pistol grip until it clears its retaining bracket under the receiver tube and the barrel housing. Reassemble in the reverse order.

Simple, sturdy, compact and reliable, with high hit and accuracy potentials, the Steyr MPi69/81 series brings the submachine gun to its practical limit. Who could ask for anything more? Currently in service with the armies of Austria, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, this clever design has found favor with the SWAT units of about 20 police departments in the U.S., including the South Dakota State Police and several law-enforcement agencies ringing the volatile Detroit metropolitan area.

The Steyr MPi69/81 submachine guns are available to law-enforcement and government agencies only through the Steyr police distributors of Gun South, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 6607, Birmingham, AL 35210). ☒

## COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

*Continued from page 15*

offense a grenade gives in a limited space is just what you need in those cases.

I'd also want plenty of grenades for combat in built-up areas. Town-clearing ops are one area where the grenade really shines. There's rarely a room in an office building or private dwelling that won't be covered by a good modern grenade like the current Belgian and Austrian issues. Those little buffered ball bearings spread evenly through the available space and it takes more than luck to live through such a storm of steel.

Unfortunately, most units moving into contact can't carry all the grenades they will need. Presuming the supply sergeant would provide all the grenades needed by a unit clearing a city or town, they'd have to requisition a half-dozen porters to carry the hardware.

Late SOFer Larry Dring used to toss grenades with the safety levers still pinned in place, and then submachine-gun anything that moved to get away from the blaster. I can't agree with that tactic either. Lucky Larry got his name from such exploits, but I don't like to take the chance. I'll just wait for more grenades or bypass the contested area. Dring's ploy might be more effective in another context.

I remember a long night in Vietnam which I spent hunkered down in the bush with a deep-recon patrol. A company of VC had figured out our

approximate location, and probed us with grenades. Typically, they weren't well-supplied and couldn't afford to expend all their ChiCom grenades. Only every tenth or fifteenth projectile turned out to be a grenade. The rest were rocks.

We lay there throughout the dark hours listening to the thuds around us and waiting for them to explode. The tactic didn't flush us out but it sure increased the pucker factor. If the VC had as many grenades as they had rocks, we wouldn't have seen the dawn.

If you choose to carry grenades on patrol or if you're ordered to include them in your kit, the question becomes how many is enough. Depending on the situation, you're either going to have too few or too many grenades. If you run into trouble, there'll be too few, even if your pack is filled. If you don't draw fire, you'll have too many and there's almost no comfortable place to carry them.

Many grunts — for reasons known only to Hollywood — carry grenades somewhere on their suspender straps. That's dumb. The attachment isn't solid and a lost grenade today becomes tomorrow's booby-trap. If you mount them high on suspender straps they can interfere with shouldering your weapon. They are hard to reach when you're on your belly. My greatest



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complaint was that grenades hooked to suspender straps tended to keep me an inch or so higher off the ground than I wanted to be when incoming was snapping overhead.

Pockets are worse places to carry grenades. In rough country it won't be long before you've got sore thighs and holes in your uniform. The only carry I ever liked was the grenade pocket on the outside of an M16 magazine pouch. The grenade is secure and accessible and the extra weight is distributed between shoulders and hips. Unfortunately, you can't carry very many grenades in this manner.

I've always held that the biggest problem with carrying grenades is related to their shape. A globular object of that size and weight doesn't really fit anywhere on webgear. If I were doing the designing, I'd come up with a new shape for the hand grenade.

If hand grenades were made as aerodynamic disks, they'd throw farther than a pineapple, and you could carry the things stacked. The only reasonable objection to such a change would be unequal fragment distribution. But what good are fragments in the ceiling and floor? The latest designs tend to spread flat sprays around a limited area, increasing hit-probability and over-all lethality. You have to computer-design a sphere for that kind of pattern. But wouldn't the disk do that naturally? Admittedly, you'd need more training in accurately throwing such a shape and the range would be decreased, but a grenade is not a football and you shouldn't be trying to nail point targets with it.

My compromise with the current system of hand grenades is to carry only one frag on patrol. But I stick close to some green trooper who's humping a half-dozen extras. ✕

## I WAS THERE

*Continued from page 10*

two hours and the family was anxious for us to remove the body. Police had started to question the villagers but no one had heard anything about VC activity in this area. No shots had been heard and there were no bullet holes in the body or casings around the hootch. Several villagers pointed out that the old man was in the field guarding the valuable buffalo because of threats from a neighboring "VC-influenced" village. They had tried to "borrow" the buffalo before.

Slews of police arrived with heavier weapons and headed off with the local PF platoon toward the neighboring village to apprehend the thieves and return the animals. In no time the national police discovered the animals. The

thieves were — regrettably — shot while resisting arrest.

The crime had been solved. The animals were returned to the rightful owners and the criminals had been punished. Case closed.

That should have been the end of it, but we hadn't reckoned with the cold, calculating demands of the MACV computer. The incident had acquired a life of its own by the time I got back to the headquarters. I was met by an agitated radio operator, who said that both Corps and Province officers had been demanding reports on the "VC attack." They also wanted to know if we needed air strikes, troop reinforcements or armor to ensure the safety of our pacification area.

Bureaucratic wheels were grinding, and throwing the machinery into reverse was out of the question. The MACV HQ computer needed an answer . . . one it could understand.

I was inclined to tell the truth. Damn the computer and full-speed ahead. Then I remembered something about a link between discretion and valor. Images of six-by-six trucks full of paperwork sprang to mind.

I couldn't think of a military explanation to cover this obviously civilian caper. To hell with it, I decided, and got on the radio. "This is Victor 7-6. About the VC incident, would you believe water-buffalo rustling?"

There was a pregnant pause while they computer programmers chewed on that one. Finally a pragmatist responded. "I will believe anything from down there."

Now we were making progress. "Inform IV Corps there was no VC assassination incident. There was a case of water-buffalo rustling with one civilian victim killed. The national police have recovered the animals and the three perpetrators were killed resisting arrest. Out."

I never heard another word about the incident from anyone. The Province and Corps report-control officers stopped sending me computer messages before breakfast. It took me a while to figure out why.

I think they were afraid another such thorough investigation might turn up a VC computer more powerful than the MACV monster. ✕

## BATTLE BLADES

*Continued from page 23*

First, you *will* get the immediate and undivided attention of your enemy. If you don't kill him with your blade toss, you may discover he now has the time and target to aim, fire and blow you away.

Secondly, you have needlessly



thrown away a valuable tool and weapon. If you chose to throw your knife rather than use a more effective weapon in the attack, it may be that you *have* no other weapons at hand. Now you're defenseless and the enemy may be smart enough to figure that out. In his adrenalin rush before he dies — assuming that your blade found a target — he has plenty of time left to close on you and *maybe even kill you with your own knife*. It is not a good gamble to risk an important weapon in a low-percentage situation.

There are a couple of other things to consider about throwing knives in combat. Knives are usually thrown at targets of known or finite distances. Not one man in a thousand can consistently stick his blade in a moving target. I have never seen *anyone* who could regularly stick his blade on the first throw at randomly changing distances beyond 30 feet. You would have to be able to accomplish this with some degree of regularity to even *consider* the prospect of taking a guy out with a thrown blade. They may do it in the movies but that's Fantasyland.

The most effective utilization of a knife on a human target in most cases is a slashing or chopping attack. A blade that is thrown is actually an attempt at mounting a stabbing attack at some distance from your hand. At the very best a thrown knife will result in a single puncture wound which is not likely to be fatal unless its placement is so accurate as to be almost surgically precise. You must be able to stick your blade in a moving target at an unknown and changing distance — and within an inch of where you are aiming — if you expect to drop a man with a thrown knife. The odds are overwhelmingly against any conventionally trained man being able to do it.

No one I know is willing to bet his life that he can do it in combat. You shouldn't either. ✕

## IN REVIEW

*Continued from page 18*

the Chairman, everyone on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, that are supposed to provide the President and the Secretary of Defense with coherent, national-level, professional military advice, is compelled as a matter of career survival to be mainly an advocate and protector of the specific interests of his own particular service (Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps). So what the highest civilian authorities get is not clear-cut, impartial, national-level strategic input, but a compromise mishmash in which the bureaucratic vested interests, prejudices and future funding of each service

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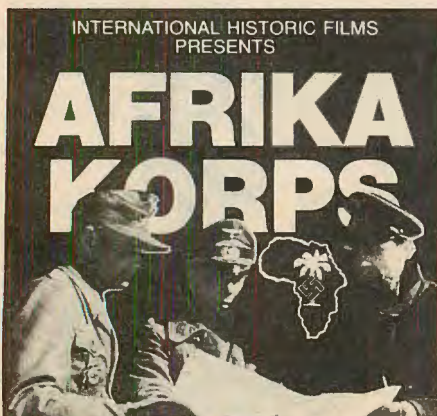


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have "equitable representation," to the detriment of serious, national-level strategic analysis.

All of these criticisms are manifestly valid and have been so for many years. Luttwak's analyses of how they affected the conduct of the Iran rescue attempt and the Grenada invasion are not cheerful reading. His proposed solution is to establish a very select corps of National Defense Officers, drawn from the existing Services — but not dependent career-wise on their specific services — to man the Joint Staff and the other higher joint headquarters, with the hope that this will bring to these organizations a truly joint outlook. That is, a national and not a specific-service-oriented view.

There are a few flaws. I could disagree with Luttwak's analyses of the Vietnam War in several places, but not here. Nevertheless, the "bottom line" is that this is a book that every serious military professional, and every citizen who is concerned with the defense of this country, should read and ponder. ✕

## DE-BRIEF

*Continued from page 2*

have plenty of ammunition going into the attack. Former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and former CIA director Richard Helms vouched for the general, saying he had handled the enemy-strength controversy properly by attempting to help various reporting agencies settle their differences and agree on an enemy order of battle.

They were aware of the crucial testimony from Walt W. Rostow, President Johnson's national security adviser — which CBS taped but did not use — stating that he knew about the disparity between CIA and military estimates of enemy strength. They even had evidence that Westmoreland had done his duty by providing the controversial information to both his military and civilian superiors. None of these clear assets were adequately exploited in pre-trial hearings.

Westmoreland's lawyers failed to tear into witnesses — notably Maj. Gen. Joseph McChristian and Col. Gains Hawkins, both former MACV staff officers — who told CBS the general intentionally withheld information in his reports to the president. They also misused the time allotted for cross-examination of all CBS witnesses. With only 20 hours left for that crucial portion of the hearings and for their summation, Westmoreland's attorneys could

not register on target and fire for effect. When the judge in the case failed to grant further time, Westmoreland likely realized his fire-support plan had failed.

All of that — like the continuing controversy over conduct of the war — is strictly academic now. The outcome of the battle is irreversible. General Westmoreland did precisely what his civilian superiors did in concluding American involvement in the Vietnam War. He simply declared victory and disengaged. ✕

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## RED DAWN BLACKBALLED...

A dozen movie theaters in West Germany have canceled screenings of *Red Dawn* after the Anti-Fascist League whined that the film was anti-communist. Then, in an impressive leap of faith, the Anti-Fascist League directly connected anti-communism in all forms to Nazi war crimes. Also, according to these critics, the movie was designed to make emplacement of U.S. missiles in Europe more palatable to Germans.

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA...

Saudi revelations that Ethiopia was offering grain for sale earlier this year haven't stemmed the tide of the misguided who continue to deliver money and materiel into the hands of Col. Mengistu Halle Mariam's Marxist government. Donations pour into the country, and the government uses that support to develop its military and suppress anti-government movements.

Moreover, according to sources in Washington, the Ethiopian government has seized an Australian vessel loaded with wheat and water-well drilling equipment in transit to Sudan. The Ethiopians feared that the non-military supplies might reach rebels in Tigre or Eritrea.

## VETS' SCHOLARSHIP...

By the time this issue of SOF hits the newsstands, Adolph Coors Company of Golden, Colo., should have the machinery in place for the Coors Veterans' Memorial Scholarship Fund. Coors and its distributors have already endowed the fund with \$500,000 "to help

Continued on page 107

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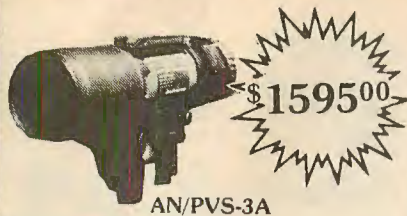
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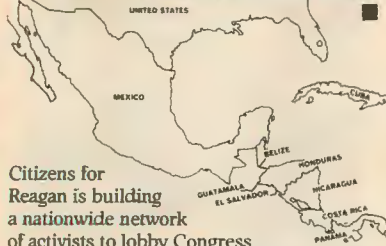
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Continued from page 101

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### SOF AT LEAPFEST . . .

Special projects director Alex McColl represented SOF at the 1984 Leapfest on 6 October of last year. Sponsored by the Rhode Island National Guard, the third annual parachutists' event featured an accuracy competition among U.S. Army active, Reserve and National Guard units, as well as teams from the United Kingdom's 10th Battalion of the Parachute Regiment and West Germany's Airborne School.

First place in the team contest went to Headquarters and Headquarters Company of 1st Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. with a total time for four jumpers (clocked from PLF to target) of 231 seconds. First individual place went to Sp4 Morris B. Weiss, B Battery, 26th Artillery. His time was 21 seconds.

### BREN TEN BROUHAHA . . .

SOF has received a number of complaints from dealers and private customers about service from Dornaus and Dixon Enterprises, Inc., manufacturers of the Bren Ten 10mm self-loading pistol. SOF takes a special interest in these readers' problems, since most of them say they first read of the pistol in SOF. Please send a chronological narrative of your dealings with Dornaus and Dixon, and photocopies of any communication between you and the manufacturer. Do not send originals of any materials.

### ESCALATION IN MOZAMBIQUE . . .

Despite provisions of last year's Nkomati Accord, the Soviet Union has recently supplied Mi-24 Hind assault helicopters to Mozambique armed forces, said Evo Fernandez,

Secretary General of the anti-communist guerrilla group Renamo. The Nkomati Accord is an agreement between South Africa and Mozambique, one provision of which is the limitation of Soviet military aid to Mozambique.

### RED BRIGADES . . .

Tax-exempt status has been granted the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), which appears to have no other function than supporting communist causes in the New World. According to its own literature, IFCO provides administrative and financial support for Nicaraguan and Grenadan communists by organizing fund-raisers and letter-writing campaigns. They also support "work brigades" for the Nicaraguan harvest through a front called the Nicaraguan Exchange. Their disinformation projects include The Grenada Foundation, Inc., which has sponsored an attempt to rename the Grenadan airport "Maurice Bishop International Airport," and printing a Maurice Bishop calendar. They claim to have sent over \$5,000 to Grenada in the last year . . . and it doesn't seem likely that those funds went to anybody who's trying re-establish freedom in Grenada.

Consider writing your congressman about the tax-exempt status of such support for enemies of democracy.

### CIA ON SOF MANUAL . . .

According to CIA spokeswoman Kathy Pherson, the Central Intelligence Agency had no comment on SOF's translation of *Operaciones Sicológicas en Guerra de Guerrillas* in the February SOF, and the subsequent distribution of a Spanish-language reprint.

### RPG STUDY . . .

The Terrorism Research Center is collecting information on the RPG series of weapons. Persons with data, photos or experience should contact Michael Moris, Terrorism Research Center, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1464, Cape Town, South Africa 8000. ✕

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- Desert camouflage**; just issued to the U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces. 50% cotton/50% nylon; Genuine GI... \$12.25/each.
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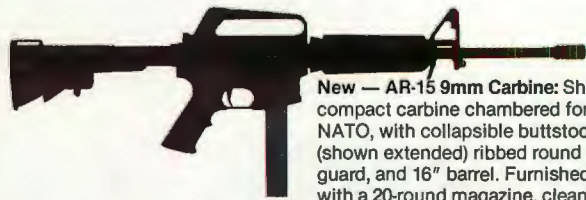
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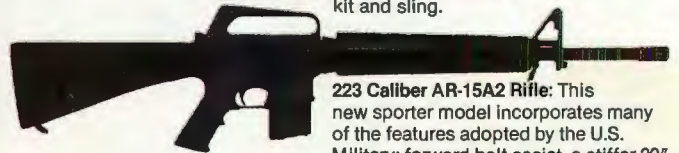


# New! The AR-15 you know is now available in 9mm.

Colt adds a new compact 9mm Carbine to its M16/AR-15 family of weapons used by law enforcement and military forces throughout the world. Acquiring the new 9mm Carbine eliminates hours of training and familiarization that other 9mm weapon systems require. It is the most practical way to broaden your police department's selection of calibers, while reducing the risk of confusion.



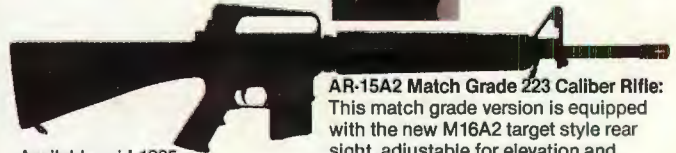
**New — AR-15 9mm Carbine:** Short compact carbine chambered for 9mm NATO, with collapsible buttstock (shown extended) ribbed round handguard, and 16" barrel. Furnished with a 20-round magazine, cleaning kit and sling.



**223 Caliber AR-15A2 Rifle:** This new sporter model incorporates many of the features adopted by the U.S. Military; forward bolt assist, a stiffer 20" barrel, with rifling twist of 1 turn in 7" for use with both standard and new NATO ammunition; stronger nylon ribbed round handguard, buttstock and pistol grip; improved heat deflector. Furnished with two 5-round magazines, cleaning kit and nylon sling.

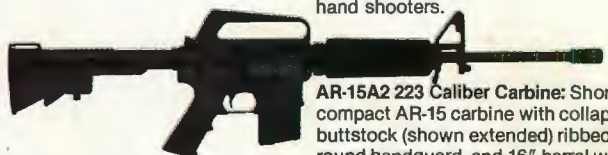


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